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TOGETHER

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ESSAYS  
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# Miracles and Supernatural Religion

BY

JAMES MORRIS WHITON, PH.D.

(YALE)

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# GETTING TOGETHER

ESSAYS

*BY FRIENDS IN COUNCIL*

ON THE

REGULATIVE IDEAS OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

EDITED BY

JAMES MORRIS WHITON, PH.D. (YALE)

AUTHOR OF "MIRACLES AND SUPERNATURAL RELIGION," ETC., ETC.

New York

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## INTRODUCTORY

The unique character of this series of Essays will appear in a glance at the list of its subjects and authors. Members of communions once estranged, and still more or less separated by theological differences, have never before been associated as here in an exposition of the fundamentals of a theology accepted by them all.

Every man's interpretation of the innumerable phenomena of the world and of human life is determined by a comparatively few fundamental ideas, the *principia* of his reasoned thought. The vast difference between ancient astronomy and modern springs from their antagonistic underlying principles of geocentric and heliocentric motion. Opposing theologies likewise spring from opposite principles at the root of thought. The differences in the religious thinking of such opposites as the deist, Thomas Paine, and the theist, Edward Caird, are rooted in opposite primary concepts — an external Deity, dwelling apart from the world and men, and the indwelling God, "who is over all, and through all, and in all."

The present diversity of thought among religious

## Introductory

men is due to the diversity of their regulative ideas. When this is reduced to unity in the fundamental principles of religious thought, men will agree as nearly in theology as now in astronomy, in which with general agreement open questions of detail remain, and minor differences of opinion — *e.g.* as to the “canals” of Mars. Progress toward such unity is plainly perceptible. The nineteenth century furnished thought with new conceptions of the universe, and so with new conceptions of the controlling Power of the universe. Consequently a distinctively modern theology has begun to supersede the mediæval, and to square religious thinking with modern learning.

“Part of the host have crossed the flood,  
And part are crossing now.”

Thoughtful readers of recent theological publications have been frequently reminded of the agreement in the *principia* of theology which keeps pace with acceptance of the new learning in other lines. So far as theology is not a fixed deposit and tradition, but a science, and therefore improvable, as every science confesses itself to be, theologians must inevitably tend toward such agreement. Years of conversation and correspondence with a group of such thinkers, Christian and Jewish, revealed this agreement, and have resulted in their collaboration of this volume. It is put forth with

## *Introductory*

the purpose of promoting the same agreement among others who have not yet consciously come to it.

Aiming simply at exposition of fundamental principles, these Essays set aside the secondary questions of inferential theology and theological method. Christology has therefore been omitted as essentially a doctrine of *functions*. Jesus' official designation, the Christ, *i.e.* the Anointed One, and his various titles of Mediator, Prophet, Priest, the King of Israel, Shepherd, Saviour, etc., clearly evince the fact that Christology belongs to the category of *method*, not of first principles. In the same secondary rank is the closely related doctrine of the Trinity, and its proper place is among other topics of inferential theology. But whatever is of primary and permanent value in these two doctrines has found place in several of these Essays.

It hardly need be added that each essayist has freely developed from his own point of view the thesis of his choice from the series of propositions agreed to by all.

Since June 1, 1912, the set time at which half of these Essays were ready, various unforeseen circumstances have made it necessary to fill vacancies, with resulting delay. Two of these were caused by the illness and lamented death of Professor HENRY S. NASH, of the Episcopal Theological School at Cambridge, Massachusetts, and

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PRESIDENT GEORGE A. GATES, of Fisk University at Nashville, Tennessee. Substitutes for the intending writers of Essays X and XIII were obtained. Inability to procure others at short notice from willing but preoccupied friends of the undertaking has constrained the editor to supply Essays IV, V, and XIV himself, rather than further to delay indefinitely the publication of the nearly completed series. This, however, has not impaired its representative value.

These expositions of the *principia* of purely theistic thought may be properly introduced by the remark that what some theologians hold to as theism is not yet cleared of conceptions inherited from a long ancestry of deistic thinkers; *e.g.*, Calvinism is essentially deistic. To this half-baked type of theism Hosea's criticism is pertinent: "Ephraim is a cake not turned."

THE EDITOR.

New York, April, 1913.

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The religious denominations with which the authors are severally connected are the Baptist, Congregational, Jewish, Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian, Protestant Episcopal, Unitarian, Universalist.



# I

## THE ULTIMATE REALITY



## I

### THE ULTIMATE REALITY

WHY does anything exist? How came this world to be? What is the ultimate reality whence all that is proceeds? Religion answers, "*In the beginning*, God," whom it terms in its Holy Scriptures "The Living God," "The Holy One," "Our Father."

The all-questioning modern *Zeitgeist* asks, What firm ground has religion for this great postulate? and refers it to science for investigation and reply. Science, professing that its proper task is to reach exact knowledge of facts and their proximate causes through study of their phenomena, has duly explored them, and has handed in its report.

The great and comprehensive achievement of science has been its intellectual construction of an orderly universe out of the mass of helter-skelter phenomena bewildering primitive man. But positive science reaches its frontier at the bottom problem to which that achievement leads. What is the unifying principle which centralises the phenomenal many in one ultimate reality? If science, con-

strained here to philosophise, can point to any valid conclusion upon this, it seems likeliest to be reached through study of that group of phenomena which surpasses all others in its endless variety — those of organic life. Biology has traced the innumerable species of the plant-world and the animal-world to a common origin in a living cell of matter termed protoplasm, and finds this to be the field of chemical and physical forces that are active in all its subsequent unlike developments.

Here the materialist rests satisfied. For him there is no real *metaphysic* — nothing *beyond* these physical and chemical forces. There is no ultimate One back of these many. It is these which generate the life of the original living cell. Undeniably plausible is his contention. Only in conjunction with these forces is life ever found. It may even be granted that science will yet realise its confident hope of demonstrating the fact of spontaneous “generation” by causing life to appear when experiment shall have hit upon the right combination of the necessary physical and chemical conditions.

But it is fairly conceivable that life may exist before it appears to exist. Sir Oliver Lodge remarks<sup>1</sup> that “magnetism needs matter to display it, but exists *in vacuo*.” We shall find reason to remark the same of life. The materialist is too

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Matter*, p. 127.

hasty in assuming that in causing it to appear he would be causing it to exist. He does not reason thus about electricity; he does not think that the dynamo which draws it from diffused latency into concentrated potency calls it out of nothing into being. When Professor Loeb reports that by hitting on the proper chemical combination of materials he has brought forth living matter, it still remains to account for the production of living matter ages before clever biologists came forth to do it. How were the proper chemicals originally brought together in the proper proportions? Either there was a directive power in control of them, or we must resort to the old Lucretian hypothesis of a fortuitous "concourse of atoms," and ascribe the entire living world to blind chance. Thus fundamentally defective, the materialist's theory also fails to account for the suggestive fact that whenever life quits its body, the chemical and physical forces that have been instrumental in building and sustaining the body immediately become instrumental in decomposing it, like thievish servants looting a house in their master's absence. The last word to be said to the materialist under these difficulties is that his theory of the universe leaves us still with a multitude of forces, mysterious genii, indeed, since he credits them with equal competency to create both maggots and Shakespeares.

The most obvious phenomenon which the world presents to the reflecting mind is that everything is moving, nothing fixed; as Heraclitus remarked in ancient Greece. To the question whether this has eternally been so, Lotze<sup>1</sup> replies in the affirmative, since it is inconceivable that mobility can originate from immobility. An aboriginal and eternal energy from which the ceaseless movement of all things proceeds is the necessary postulate of rational thought. This parental Force of forces has revealed its nature in its works.

That it is not a blindly or aimlessly working energy the marvellous mechanism of the universe, exhibited as far as telescope or microscope can penetrate, gives ever-increasing proof. Mathematical astronomy has discovered in the system of a hundred million stars a system of harmoniously related principles—of ideas, as well as of flaming spheres. And Nature everywhere exhibits an evolutionary process going on that reveals plans issuing in ends. Greek philosophy at its highest reach did not err in positing the origin of all existence in an architectonic Mind, a living Intelligence. As equivalent to this, but more conformable to biological truth, we prefer to say, an intelligent Life. Reason also justifies this metathesis of the adjective and the noun. Inseparable as are life and intelligence, we have to distinguish which

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines of the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 65.

is the datum, and which is the function of the other. As we cannot conceive of intelligence except as living, while we can conceive of life without intelligence, we have to regard life as the datum, the basal reality, of which intelligence is an attribute and function.

Since algæ first sprouted from the ocean slime, and grass cleft the sands of the first beach that broke through the watery envelope of the wrinkling globe, life has been functioning intelligently in a vast work of body-building, fashioning from a limited variety of materials the structures of plants and animals in limitless variety and number. Wondrously does the master-workman apportion to his journeymen in their several groups of cells their distinct responsibility for the different parts of the structure in toil co-operant to the common end, for the frame and its covering, for its upkeep, and its apparatus for communication and co-operation with its neighbours and its successors. More wonderful still in life's directive and selective activity is the endowing of a small group of cells with the peculiar power of carrying it out and onward to create new bodies of identical type and capacity. The marvel of marvels is the tiny magazine of capacities and powers which life stores in each one of these reproductive cells within the compass of an almost microscopic particle of matter — the future Plato or Dante, an elephant, a whale, in



a mere speck! And how much is life always poisoning in perfect stability on how little! — as it were a pyramid poised from age to age on its apex. In the more than two thousand atoms of six ingredients in a molecule of hemoglobin — the colouring matter in the blood of red-blooded animals — one atom is of iron. Without this one atom the animal could not exist, for on this in its relation to all the rest depends the animal's power to oxygenate its blood by breathing. And evermore this infinitely little keeper of so much is at its post.

In these infinitesimals of the great magician's body-building work the skill of transcendent genius is more conspicuous than energy. The energy which uplifts the moisture of the soil three hundred feet to the tops of the redwood firs, or which drives the rush of a six-ton elephant in charge at the hunter, is the energy of life, evidenced as such by its sudden cut-off when the tree is girdled, or when a bullet pierces the monster's brain. In an experiment at the Massachusetts Agricultural College,<sup>1</sup> nearly forty years ago, the expansive energy exerted in the growth of a squash on its vine burst the iron harness in which it had been so confined as to pull upon a graduated scale-beam. Its pull at the bursting point a needle marked on the beam as 5000 pounds.

<sup>1</sup> For details see *Report of the Massachusetts State Board of Agriculture*, 1874-75.



Before life thus energising begins to be recognised when growing things come into being, was it non-existent, or merely unrecognised, and in waiting for the conditions of its manifestation to be ripe? In other words, is "dead" matter really as lifeless as it seems to be? The verdict of common sense in this as in other instances has been reversed in the high court of science. This has revolutionised the popular idea of matter, now said to be "a pauper-denizen of the conceptual world."<sup>1</sup> Seemingly motionless and inert, matter is found astir with molecular energy, alive, so to speak, with the liveliest motion. The material atom, long supposed to be the ultimate constituent of brute stuff, has been resolved into immaterial components, "electrons," in as rapid motion as light or lightning — over seven hundred of them in an atom of hydrogen, the least ponderable matter known — mere points of energy. The inertia of matter, the brute reality of which Dr. Johnson supposed he proved by its resistance to his kick, is simply the resistance of these its constituent energies in combination. The child and the scientist agree in distinguishing a living from a dead thing by the presence or absence of the spontaneous movement in which, however slight, life gives its infallible sign of the self-moving energy which nothing else

<sup>1</sup> *Mind*, April, 1912; "Matter and Memory," by E. D. Fawcett.

possesses, and which must have existed as the uncaused "first cause" postulated by metaphysicians as the aboriginal spring of the caused movement observed in all things else. This is precisely what science has come upon when it has analysed "dead" matter into the active energy that has given it being.

Still there is much futile speculation how life could ever have been introduced into a world that was once a fiery globe. Arrhenius suggests that it may have been transported hither in "spores" brought by meteors from interstellar space, where its existence would still remain to defy further explanation. There is a rational quietus to such fancies. Life was never introduced here, for the simple reason that it was always here. Its rudimentary activity is found to have been astir in the molecules of the nascent globe. Here it was in the primeval world-stuff, ready to expand its energy as soon as the cycles of the ages had brought forth a habitable world in fitness to nourish life's swarming progeny.

Its appearance there has been thought a great break with all past existence. This science flatly contradicts, declaring that the evolution of nature proceeds in unbroken continuity from the first — the human springing from the animal, the animal from the plant, organic nature from inorganic, in their successive differentiations. Here are appar-

ent leaps indeed, but no break. The fact is as certain as the differentiating energy is mysterious. Naturally so, for life, the most familiar of all things, is also the most mysterious of all, whether in microbe or in man. And what else than life can that differentiating energy be? It is admitted that all physical and chemical forces now existing have been active in the world from its beginning. But it is impossible to ascribe all the phenomena of life to these alone. Karl Pearson<sup>1</sup> tells us from the agnostic's standpoint that mechanism, though it may describe life, cannot explain it. "Vitalism," says President G. Stanley Hall,<sup>2</sup> a competent observer, "is coming to the fore in biology." The mysterious continuator which links organic nature to inorganic, and carries the evolutionary process through all the successive orders of nature without a break, can be none other than life itself, the builder of the universe, the self-existent, all-moving, all-moulding energy, the eternal root whence all existence springs.

Here is firm footing on the bottom rung of a ladder of thought reaching outward and upward to the flaming battlements of the universe. Life, whose rudimentary phenomena have been discovered even in the primordial stage of this planet, cannot be rationally thought resident only on this

<sup>1</sup> *Die Zelle und die Gewebe*, B. ii, s. 258.

<sup>2</sup> *Founders of Modern Psychology*.

speck of the illimitable whole. When the spectro-scope has shown us that the inorganic material of our world exists also in all the worlds of space, we are compelled to infer that the energising life which pulsates through it here is equally diffused throughout the starry cosmos. But as the organic forms that life builds here differ with their different environment of sea, and land, and climate, so must they in worlds unlike our own be unlike to forms fitted to the conditions of this. What right have we to assume that life cannot exist in some form or other, however unimaginable, upon a waterless globe? Amidst all such differences, inconceivably beyond imagination as they are, the constant reality underlying all, immanent in all the constructive forces found in matter, is the all-moulding energy, the cosmical life, from which all movement issues, and all beginnings rise.

Beyond the solid but sandy shore which our quest of the ultimate reality has reached in this general concept of life lies a more fertile and inviting land. We must reach richer and more satisfying predicates of life than we have in the bald concept of it as mere parental energy. Is it such in any higher sense than that in which poets speak of Mother Earth, whose womb life fecundates to give birth to the countless creatures that "die and return to their dust"? What life is can be

discovered, as before remarked, only in what it does. Inorganic nature has told us of this all that it can, and organic nature has now to testify of more.

We have already observed that intelligence is a function of life, not life a function of intelligence. The mechanical intelligence which appears in the mathematics of the skies appears also in the geometrising of the bee, which builds its hexagonal cells in a combination of the maximum of strength and capacity with the minimum of material. Long before it produced the bee life had given in the grass an object-lesson of the intelligent combination of lightness, stiffness and strength in the long thin tubes of straw that support the heavy heads of grain, and are copied in metal by the modern engineer. The same necessity which impels the aviator to substitute aluminium for steel, life had already provided for in the hollow bones of the soaring bird. The higher interests of life begin to appear in the tiny republics which it organises among bees and ants. In these, in the bird that broods and feeds and teaches its nestlings, in the timid beast that defies the hunter in defence of its young, we see the ascent of life from mechanical toward distinctively moral ends. In such rudimentary examples of the self-devotion of life to kindred life we may glimpse the thin crescent which in the process of the ages rounds out into



the orb of philanthropic devotion to man as man, however vile, and of the saint's requital of persecution with prayer and self-sacrifice even unto death.

What life is can come fully out only in the highest of all the successive natures which it brings to birth in our world. The distinctive and most significant characteristic of human life, even in its earliest known stage, is an element clearly transcendent to all the forces and forms of the visible world — transcendent physically, intellectually, morally. Physically, this transcendent element appeared of old in man's unique power to break the bounds set to other creatures by climates and continents, to dwell both in arctic frost and torrid heat, and to become the one universal species of the round world. Intellectually, the same element is evinced by the unlimited educability which, since its great "prehistoric" achievement in producing fire, has conducted him to his present mastery of Nature, reading the secrets of the stars, making the lightning his messenger, and yoking it to his wheels. Even more significant, though less conspicuous than this educability, is man's innate conviction that his present life is somehow related to a future life, of which primeval men seem to have left a memorial in the relics of feasts and weapons found beside relics of the dead. Add to this that haunting sense of the presence and power

of unseen superhuman beings, of which all savage races give abundant evidence by the superstitious fears even now not extirpated from civilisation. Even in these first blind gropings of religious feeling toward its transcendent object life prophesied the futility of all attempts to explain its phenomena by any experiments in biological laboratories.

Of this transcendent element in human life the poets often speak:

“Unless above himself he can  
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man;”

And again:

“That men may rise on stepping-stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things.”

But in so speaking the poets refer to a transcendence that is more than physical or intellectual, and is conspicuous in the moral nature which develops in man alone, and is the motor nerve of his gradual evolution, “slowly working out the beast” inherited from a lower form of life, toward the complete humanisation of the animal into the spiritual man.

“The moral ideal” is a modern phrase with a history immeasurably ancient, reaching back to the “prehistoric” time when the Latin word *hostis* meant both stranger and enemy. The morally transcendent element in human life has revealed itself from then till now in a succession of men in

various lands and races, erecting themselves to a height of vision beyond the horizon of their fellows. Descrying thence an ideal of moral betterment, such a one makes himself their leader toward it in a path of personal toil and sacrifice. The goodly fellowship of prophets, the noble army of martyrs, once clothed in sackcloth, now crowned with light, are immortal witnesses to the reality of that transcendent quality, that "vital spirit of betterment," which seems to be a Holy Ghost immanent in the life of man.

"Shy yearnings of the savage,  
Unfolding thought by thought,  
To holy lives are lifted,  
To visions fair are wrought."

By this has the moral rise of man out of bestiality into humanity been achieved through countless deaths, and out of the mud of superstitious magic the lily of ethical religion has bloomed.

"One accent of the Holy Ghost  
The heedless world has never lost."

Long the vision ever tarries, but ever its pursuit persists. Generation after generation renews the baffling, undiscouraged struggle toward it. Reaching the summit whither it beckoned him, its votary sees a grander summit beyond, and bequeaths the struggle toward it to the children of his spirit. In this incessant pursuit of the ever-flying goal of



an ever-growing ideal, the transcendent spirit of its prophet reflects its radiance on the deity to whom he feels himself related, and with whom he essays to commune. Inevitably he ascribes to him the reality mirrored in his ideal.

To this transcendent energy of the life immanent in our flesh and blood the name of *spirit* has been appropriated. The word, as we apply it to one another, is understood to mean life that is lively, aspiring, ardent, highly sensitive to honour and duty. Sometimes the simple word *life* is charged intensively with this large meaning, as when St. Paul speaks of "the life which is life indeed," or as in Tennyson's lines:

"'Tis life of which our nerves are scant;  
More life and fuller that I want."

Yet life seems to be commonly thought of not as an energy *sui generis*, but as a state of body, "the state of being alive." Thus the *Standard Dictionary* vainly essays to define what is no more definable, except by itself, than gold is, a thing inexpressible in any simpler terms. Thus most of us almost seem to be unconscious materialists. In giving to embodied life, when striking its highest and richest notes, the name of spirit, we revive the thought of ancient days, which ascribed to beings of a higher world transcendent energies

that they were wont to infuse into their mortal protégés, as in the combats of Homeric heroes. If we imitate such examples when we think of the Almighty Power as spirit, it is because, if we think at all of the Higher than man, we, like those naïve ancients, can think only in our highest terms of thought. All that chiefly concerns us here is the simple fact that the two words, life and spirit, as used in common speech, represent, so far as they bear any distinctive meaning, the lower and the higher tide of the one self-moving, self-directing, purposive, constructive energy—the ultimate reality in that system of ideas which we call the universe.

In the concept of life thus self-revealed as spirit by the self-erecting, transcendent energy evinced in the evolution of human nature our ascending path of thought reaches the summit of a mount of vision. The one energy found carrying forward an evolutionary process throughout the cosmos from its beginning in the stir of electrons—the molecular forces that generated the atoms massed in the heavens and the earth—into the ascent of life from form to form through all the ranks of Nature up to man is the ultimate reality whence all that is proceeds, and is none other than One Creative Spirit, eternal God, eternal Life. “Nature is God’s mask,” said James Martineau a half-century ago. “Nature is Spirit,” said Principal

Fairbairn twenty-five years later. From the first-formed nucleus of the globe to this habitable world, from monera to man, Nature is the increasing utterance of Spirit in an embodiment of life in growing measure, till of man the Hebrew psalmist sang, "Thou hast made him little lower than God." We mark the successive stages of this rising tide of life—motion, growth, consciousness sensitive, reflective, religious—up to those transcendent mystic aspirations of the God-conscious life in which the parental source of them, as well as of stars that shine and disappear, and of creatures that are born and die, is most divinely manifest as Spirit.

But furthermore, we have to think of Spirit as immanent not only in the sheen of stars, or in the exuberant life of terrestrial forms, or in the aspirations of religious thought. Every cubic millimeter of "empty space" is pervaded by gravitation, light, electricity, magnetism, etc.,—names with which science labels distinctive manifestations of the one creative energy which we recognise as Spirit and Life. "The forces of Nature," said that distinguished scientist, Joseph Le Conte, "are naught else than different forms of the one omnipresent divine energy."<sup>1</sup> Here we glimpse a profounder meaning in the ancient question,<sup>2</sup> "Do not

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution and its Relation to Religious Thought*, p. 299.

<sup>2</sup> *Jeremiah* xxiii, 24.

I fill heaven and earth? saith Jehovah." And so all its visible embodiments in the forms of inorganic and organic Nature are, as it were, but islands in a shoreless, fathomless ocean of invisible life,<sup>1</sup> no less real than the equally invisible ocean of the atmosphere. Hence rise the tides which in every spring-time run up the parallels of latitude on every continent in the flood of fresh life which clothes the fields and woods in green, and repopulates earth and air with all the insect tribes. So sings the Hebrew bard:

"Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created;  
And thou renewest the face of the ground."

Again,

"When that which drew from out the boundless deep  
Turns again home,"

he sings:

"Thou takest away their breath, they die,  
And return to their dust."<sup>2</sup>

To the teaching of science that we live in the invisible ocean of a cosmic ether filling all space and pervading all substance, even that of granite and steel, we have reason to add that we no less really live and move and have our being<sup>3</sup> in the

<sup>1</sup> See remark on magnetism, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Psalm* civ, 29, 30.

<sup>3</sup> *Acts* xvii, 28.

coextensive ocean of a cosmic life. Not only are we in it, but it, like that ether, is in us, immanent in our vital breath, in our life-blood, in every living cell of our bodies, the life of our life. Not more really does the ocean of waters supply the rain that nourishes all terrestrial life, and the ocean of air feed the vital current of every living thing, than this ocean of life laves and feeds all the isles of visible being that dot its viewless, boundless expanse. Our ordinary consciousness reflects like the face of the sea merely the sun and clouds of our daily interests. Beneath lie the unplumbed depths of sub-conscious life, which the psychologist explores. From its pulsations spring unbidden the intuitions of seers, the visions of prophets, the aspirations and ideals that have thus far advanced the evolution of humanity from brutishness.

"The shores of thought and feeling know  
The spirit's tidal ebb and flow."

Whence but from that immanent Spirit in the depths of human life is the otherwise inexplicable idea of the infinite, which uniquely distinguishes so tiny and feeble a creature as man, and makes his permanent content with finite good impossible? "He who is a mere speck on the face of a boundless expanse can yet aspire to a participation in the whole of infinity."<sup>1</sup> What other than that

<sup>1</sup> Eucken, *The Truth of Religion*.

Spirit is the transcendent factor in humanity which thus is continually erecting man above himself into consciousness of a higher than earthly fellowship, and presentiments of a more than mortal destiny? Our individual will is our own, with power on our own act and on the world to make of these mysterious impulses such use as it elects to make. Their generator in our life can be none other than the parental Spirit of the universe, infinitely transcendent, innate and immanent in his offspring. Very near to this was Herbert Spencer's thought, at his viewpoint as a simply scientific student of Nature, that the infinite and eternal energy whence all things proceed wells up within us in the form of consciousness.

It is the effort of religion to apprehend in reason the transcendent Spirit whom it seeks to know and aspires to understand. Reasoned religious thought, or theology, has squared its conclusions to the knowledge of Nature, or science, attained at the time. The great advance in this, which the last half-century made in the discovery that the creation of man is the climax of a continuous evolution from the lowest grade of life, was stoutly combated by theologians as atheistic. But they presently discovered that they had mistaken for an enemy an ally, who had opened their eyes to the living Spirit immanent in Nature. This vision, anciently glimpsed by a few elect souls, but



long hidden from readers of its record in their sacred writings, broke the spell of the theologies which, like Calvinism, represented the living God only as an outside God, revealing his will and sending his Spirit down from heaven, and governing the world from on high. That vision, disclosed by science as the handmaid of religion, revealed an open door through many a supposed barrier to exploring reason, and has become the distinctive principle of the progressive theology which deserves the respect of educated men who have ceased to respect any other.

During the last quarter-century study of the unit of living matter, its primordial cell, has shown biologists the utmost complexity of animate nature wrapped in the minute dot whose growth they watch in life's unfolding processes of multiplication and differentiation, specialisation of function and selection of nutriment, that create an animal or a man reproducing the characteristics of ancestors near and remote. Biology has set its seal to the affirmation that Nature makes no break in her apparent leap from inorganic to organic. Distinguishing in this young and rapidly growing science the simply observational from the rationally interpretative, religious reason rejoices that the latter — termed by Dr. Newman Smyth<sup>1</sup> “the higher biology” — confirms her ancient intuition of

<sup>1</sup> *Through Science to Faith*, pp. 8, 9.

the fountain of all life as the life-giving Spirit, "the Living God," of old proclaimed by spiritual seers as "above all, and through all, and in all," Father of all, "in whom we live and move and have our being," ever working out the counsels of Eternal Goodness.

This personal appellation of the all-parental Life is necessitated by the lack of any higher term to represent the superhuman object of human reverence. Personality being the highest manifestation of human life, no impersonal terms, such as energy, force, power, can satisfy our highest conceptions of the ultimate Reality from which all existence springs. The essentials of personality are the self-conscious, purposive intelligence, and self-directing will, which we recognise in ourselves. We cannot but impute these to the infinite Source of the cosmic evolutionary process in which we discover the same. Yet finite personality can be no more than an imperfect symbol of the infinite. Only in forgetfulness of this can it be thought unreasonable to attribute personality to the living God, as a term suggestive of a reality transcending the reach of thought. In him is the whole; what we find in ourselves are but fragments or sparks of it.

"They are but broken lights of thee,  
And thou, O Lord, art more than they."



“Perfect personality,” said Lotze,<sup>1</sup> “is reconcilable only with the conception of an Infinite Being.” It is recognisable in the name by which the Hebrew Scriptures often refer to God as “the Holy One.” Wholeness is the basic idea of holiness, as spiritual completeness and integrity. We may use Isaiah’s grand trisagion, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts,” as fitly expressing our thought of perfectness in each of its conceivable dimensions as constituting the personality of the Holy One.

But *Father*, as an appellative of Deity, implies benevolence as well as personality, and so encounters a more ancient and persistent objection—the evil and the suffering in the world. Religion cannot, says Eucken, explain this without tripping into sophistry, but does more; overcomes it with good. From the soil created by the glacial deposits of evil ages religion has raised life-sustaining harvests. Above all the groanings of the burdened world rise the triumph-songs of its happy warriors. Repeated in every generation that sanctifies with sacrifice and blood the arduous struggle for the humanisation of man we hear the doxologies lifted by the world’s cross-bearers to the Eternal Goodness, and their exulting cry, “We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines of the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 69.

Yet Nature sometimes drowns as with the roar of iron wheels the whisper of the Spirit in our hearts. In many of her operations we are mainly impressed with the aspect of a pitiless mechanism.

“Streams will not curb their pride  
The just man not to entomb,  
Nor lightnings turn aside  
To give his virtues room.”

In contemplating our environment by the stupendous power-house of the starry heavens the thought of an infinite fatherliness pervading it is ready to faint in the overwhelming rush and flame of gigantic spheres. Then “the still, small voice” that Elijah heard in the mount of God, after the whirlwind, the earthquake and the fire had passed, makes itself heard again. Whence, it asks, the mother’s love, the compassionate ministries of philanthropy to the destitute and suffering, the outcast and the leper? Whence the inspiration that hastes with the Red Cross to the battlefield, the sympathy that speeds to the antipodes with succour to the victims of famine and plague? Whence but from the Infinite Life that imparted such life to man? The Maker of the stars is found lavishing beauty on the humblest flowers, and on the tiniest shells dredged from the sea-bottom, as if to show infinite Power impartially thoughtful of the least and the greatest of its creatures. The Infinite One cannot be less than infinite in any attribute of worth.

So reasoned Jesus with the men of Galilee: "If God doth so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Wherever we behold the throne of his majestic might, there may we confidently recognise the seat of an equally majestic mercy, however deeper than our sounding-line its ways may run.

Our course of thought has reasonably verified religion's great postulate, "*In the beginning, GOD.*" In so doing it has also answered the great questions this involves, Who and what is God? in the terms of a sublime reality at once most familiar and most mysterious, uniting the opposite poles of religious thought, the mystic and the practical. Religion's sacred books anciently replied to that great question, "God is light," and "God is love." Paralleling the lines of thought which we have followed, one of these answers employs a term of physical energy, the other a term of moral energy, and these two are unified in the joint affirmation of the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures, "God is Spirit." Spirit is to mortals the transcendent mystery to whose immanence in the phenomena of animate natures common thought has given the name of life. Religion ever needs what is transcendent to the worshipper, but it also needs to satisfy the demand of reason that this be intelligible to the common man. To meet this demand we

must translate the unknown into what is at least not so unknown, the strange into the familiar, the hidden into the phenomenal. Thus the discarnate concept, God is Spirit, becomes more apprehensible by thought in its incarnate equivalent, God is Life. Though Holy Scripture nowhere utters these words, it so constantly implies and suggests them that their idea has rooted itself in religious thought.

The thesis of a little book written in 1677 by Henry Scougal, professor of divinity at Aberdeen—"Religion is the Life of God in the Soul of Man"—has in recent years gained wide currency among those who have rediscovered the Biblical doctrine of the immanence of God in his world. It has found expression in sacred song:

"Prayer is the breath of God in man  
Returning whence it came."

The mediæval mystics without the light which the modern study of Nature has shed upon the truth they affirmed, realised that a divine life was pulsing in their own, upwelling in their purest aspirations. Our final word shall be borrowed from that prince in modern philosophy, the veteran Rudolf Eucken,<sup>1</sup> of Jena, who was awarded the Nobel prize in 1908: "The idea of God signifies to us nothing other than an Absolute Spiritual Life . . . constituting the substance of Reality . . . its foundation and apex."

JAMES MORRIS WHITON.

<sup>1</sup> *The Truth of Religion*, p. 614.

## II

# HUMANITY THE INTERPRETER OF DEITY



## II

### HUMANITY THE INTERPRETER OF DEITY

MODERN theology builds from the ground. It does not begin with God, it begins with man. It looks to the nature of man, the life of man, the heart of man for its most "sure word of prophecy" concerning what lies above and beyond him.

The fact that man *is*, here and now, and is a spiritual being, is the one primary and significant fact in all our knowledge, and is the starting-point of all our inquiries. For if we can be sure of anything, we are absolutely sure that we are, and that we are conscious, personal, individual beings. Among all miracles and mysteries, the surpassing marvel of the universe revealed to us is just this indisputable and stupendous fact, that a race of beings *such as we are* exists here and now. *Man is*, whether he has always been or not, and whether he is to continue to be or not. The question of his origin and the question of his destiny are indeed vastly important, but they are nevertheless

secondary. The first and main question always is, *What is man as we know him in this present world?*

That he is the fullest known expression of life can hardly be doubted for a moment. All that biology or zoology teaches warrants us in speaking of the other orders of creation as "lower" or "inferior." There may be manifestations of mind in animals, and of instincts akin to mind, which may have a higher import than we are yet aware of; but these are unquestionably rudimentary and imperfect as compared with the intellectual and spiritual qualities of human nature. Whether we accept the Biblical, traditional account of man's first appearance on this planet, as the older theology does, or the modern, evolutionary account, as the newer theology does, we shall all agree that he is the crowning product of creation, the fairest blossom on the tree of life which this world affords; and we may both truthfully and reverently say that all things are put under his feet, "all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea."

And if we ask ourselves what is in man, we must answer that we certainly know that he is a thinking, reasoning, learning being; that he grows,



acquires knowledge, remembers, profits by experience, and develops a character; that he loves, aspires, enjoys, and sorrows; that he has the power of initiating action, and is able to control and direct somewhat, albeit but slightly, the forces of the material world; that he has a sense of right and wrong, or possesses ethical ideals; that he has likewise a sense of beauty, or possesses æsthetic conceptions; *especially* that he has a sense of divine things, or possesses religious susceptibilities; and that he conceives of the infinite while he recognises himself as finite. All this we are perfectly sure of as belonging to man and being wholly natural to him; and we are to think of all this, not as seen in its most feeble or imperfect manifestation in the lower stages of human development, among inferior individuals or tribes, but rather as found among the highest specimens of our race — among its poets, prophets, seers, saints, artists, orators, statesmen, inventors, scholars: for here we shall see more nearly what true man really is; and if we are to interpret man, and try to see what he himself interprets, we must find the true man. For just as we judge of fruit-trees or flowering shrubs or live stock (when seeking to know their best capabilities), not by the poorest products we can find, but by the finest and the most highly cultivated; so must we estimate the potentialities of

mankind, not by its savages, its criminals, or its fools, but by such an One as trod this earth nineteen hundred years ago, and who "knew what was in man."

This consideration immediately opens a wide range of observation and reflection. We may look out over the whole world and backward through all history to note instances of human greatness and goodness. How numerous they are! What marks of genius, what exhibitions of virtue and grace, what splendid achievements of the intellect, what depth and strength of the affections, what sanctity of the spirit, what bravery and generosity and devotion our common humanity has shown forth in the long ages! Surely these things have crowned it with glory and honour! No race but has its noble men and women, no nation but has its inspiring story! "A light that never was on sea or land" touches the heights reached by the best of mankind, and makes our human world radiant and beautiful with both realisation and promise. Oppressed by the sordidness and viciousness which we see all too frequently, we sometimes forget this brighter side of human life; but if we take due account of it, we cannot fail to reassure our hearts with faith, hope and love respecting the children of men.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and

For the point is that all this nobleness of humanity is at once fulfilment and prophecy. It is as much a reality, a substantial fact of experience and history, as any other fact that can be named; and as such it registers the high levels to which "the river of the water of life" in our human world has occasionally risen. Now modern theology, admitting here the great principle of development, holds that what *has been*, in this respect, is merely the forerunner of what *shall be*. It believes that humanity is still in process of progress, is still on the march, and will march on illimitably. This may be deemed only an agreeable fancy, but it appears to have behind it the whole evolutionary history of the world. While no one may guess what is Nature's goal for mankind, one who is imbued with the twofold spirit of Christianity and modern science finds himself filled with a great and glorious hope, alike for the individual and for the race. He sees the long and painful way over which man has struggled onward and upward out of animalism and savagery into civilisation and spirituality; admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!"

— *Hamlet*, Act II, Sc. 2.

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him?  
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?  
For thou hast made him but little lower than God,  
And crownest him with glory and honor."

— *Ps.* viii, 4, 5, Am. Revision.

he sees, too, the frightful blunders, the terrible perversions and the appalling tragedies which have attended this tedious course of human events; but he rejoices to be able to read all these dark experiences in the light of achievement, to see that through them all the nobler elements of humanity have gradually gained ascendancy, and to perceive that the progress already actually accomplished is the best possible promise of still greater advances in the illimitable future.

From this position it will be seen at the outset that modern theology necessarily repudiates the old dogma of "total depravity." The doctrine of "a fallen race" and "a ruined world," first boldly and systematically promulgated by St. Augustine, and, more than a thousand years later, re-enforced by John Calvin, has played an enormous rôle in the history of Latin Christianity. It has been preached in sermons, recited in creeds, and sung in hymns; and such expressions as "worms of the dust," "a viper's brood," "imps of Satan," and "children of the devil" have been as familiar in religious circles as the holy names of God and Christ. Alas! the blighting error which they have represented has poisoned untold myriads of minds; and who shall say how far the evil spirit which it has helped to provoke has been the source of such atrocities as characterised the work of the Holy

Inquisition and the reign of "bloody Mary"? Certain it is that this and kindred ideas now hang like leaden weights upon the wings of true religion, and the whole modern attitude of mind, at once fearless and reverent, is directly against them.

The Christian missionary brings back from so-called "heathen" lands tales enough, to be sure, of human wickedness and wretchedness, but he brings also a tale of human nobleness and spiritual aspiration which makes us see that "God hath made of one all nations of men," who in such ways as are open to them are seeking him, "if haply they might feel after him and find him." So modern theology earnestly sets forth, as one of its principal claims to recognition, the truth of a higher estimate of human nature than that which has prevailed in the past. In this we hold that man is not the depraved and ruined creature of earlier thought, inheriting the guilt of his so-called "first parents" and incapable of goodness in himself; but is rather the growing child of God, still very imperfect, but in process of development, and forever under the wise and loving tutelage and discipline of a paternal government; thus emphasising at once the inherent dignity and the priceless worth of the human soul, while recognising all its incompleteness, and remembering that an Eternal Good-

ness works in and through all its experiences to educate, purify and redeem it.<sup>1</sup>

But now modern theology goes an important step further. Recognising the richness of human life as proof of the dignity and worth of human nature, and seeing how the fact that the universe has already produced man is not only a glorious realisation of the seeming aim or tendency of Nature's creative work thus far, but a reasonable promise of still more glorious developments in the future, *it also sees in humanity certain distinctively divine implications*. It perceives that the higher ranges of human life bear witness to a supreme Life surrounding, overbrooding, interpenetrating and transcending it. This profoundly significant truth presents two aspects which we must clearly understand.

1. Humanity affords our chief warrant for believing in Deity; in other words, the existence of God may be most surely inferred from the nature and life of man. For not only must every effect have its cause, but the cause must at least be adequate to the effect. This is a necessary law of thought; we cannot think otherwise. So there must be *something* in the universe that has produced man which is *as great as he* — yes, as great

<sup>1</sup> See the author's *The Spiritual Outlook* (1902), chapter on "The Spiritual Element in Social Service," pp. 263-280.



as the very greatest of all men. Water cannot rise higher than its source, we say; so morality, intelligence, spirituality in man cannot rise higher than the same or equivalent qualities in their source—the source must at least be as high, as great, as real as these its outcome. If it be said that all these things are merely an efflorescence of matter, the answer is that such a contention makes matter itself to be spiritual, thus practically conceding the whole point at issue. For we *know* ourselves to be spiritual beings—indeed, we are more certain of this than that we dwell in a merely material world; and if it be claimed that spirituality is a product of our physical life, or that life itself is merely the crest of a wave of material energy flowing through us, then the reply is that, since we *know* that this energy bears a spiritual character in us, the claim simply spiritualises what is called material energy. Doubtless the truth about this is deeper and larger than the old distinction between “matter” and “spirit” has implied; at any rate the tendency of scientific thought at present appears to be toward the recognition of a fundamental unity in Nature, with nothing to forbid the belief that this unity is essentially spiritual. Indeed, Professor Hyslop has said that the traditional gulf between “matter” and “spirit” no longer exists—that “matter” is not “dead,” but alive with spirit; and Principal Fairbairn has

pointed the aphorism that "Nature is Spirit." The *characteristic* of spirit, however, is found in persons rather than in things, in the higher energies of thought and will and love. So our statement of the truth here urged is that spiritual personality in man can have had its source in nothing *less* than a spiritual Personality greater than he; and this greater spiritual Personality — infinite in power, wisdom, goodness, holiness and love — the Christian theologian calls God, the heavenly Father, meaning precisely what he understands the Master to have meant in saying that "God is Spirit."

Here is indicated, briefly, the essential ground of the instinctive, well-nigh universal faith of mankind in a supernatural Ruler of the world. The fact that *man is what he is* leads him almost irresistibly to believe that he has sprung somehow — no matter just how — from a kindred source not inferior but superior to himself. What he sees in the world around him — power, wisdom, order, uniformity, continuity, an absence of chance and caprice, an overruling benevolence (whether he sees all these, or their opposites, will depend somewhat on his temperament and training) — he refers to the ground afforded by his own nature and experience for its clearest interpretation. Thus while there is a certain manifold revelation of God in Nature, in the vast outlying realm of the ma-



terial cosmos, the surest and the highest revelation which he makes of himself is in that humanity which, being spiritual, is inherently and eternally akin to his own glorious essence.

But here we must remember that it is only as man's development reaches the more advanced or elevated stages, above the animal plane, and even above the psychical, that he becomes most truly aware of the divine presence and power. Upon the lower levels he may feel and believe that God is, may even yearn after him "as the hart panteth after the waterbrooks," and may exclaim with Job, "O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!" But it is rather upon the higher levels, most familiar to the pure in heart, the devout and the loving, where the souls of men are illumined by the truth as it was in Jesus, and are touched by the sanctifying influence of his spirit—it is mainly here that they awake to full spiritual self-consciousness, and come to know themselves to be children of God, and are thus enabled to appreciate best the various evidences which he gives of his own being and grace. The experiences which belong to these loftier attainments are not to be set down as unreal or meaningless. For example, what we call the Holy Spirit, however we may define the phrase, must be something more than an idle fancy. That mysterious and august Voice which approves and con-

demns, prompts and restrains, inspires and soothes, and becomes to the spiritually cultivated soul a constant Guide, as unfailing as the magnetic needle of the mariner's compass — can it be that this is merely a figment of the imagination? And what is prayer, with its answering peace? or penitence, with its succeeding sense of pardon? or resignation, with its patient contentment? or self-sacrificing love, with its submission, its sanctity and its joy? Nothing but empty breath or wasted feeling? Not if the human heart knows its own story; and those who have entered most deeply into these exalted spiritual experiences are the surest to testify that such are the most blessed realities of their lives. When Columbus with his discouraged crew approached the new world, he was convinced by the flight of birds and by pieces of drift-wood that land was not far away, though still unseen. So to the devout soul do the inspirations, the flashes of light, the urgings and reproofs of conscience, the serene peace of a pure heart, and the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, all of which visit it anon, seem like breezes that blow from the divine realm, bearing trustworthy intimations of the mighty Spirit who draws all things unto himself. No! it cannot be that that which is highest and best in us is utterly misleading, or that nothing but an infinite vacancy answers to all our holiest aspirations. The eye is related to the sun.

No matter how made or developed, it is adapted to the rays of the sunlight, perhaps has been adapted or related by the very fact that it has been compelled to adjust itself thereto. The ear is adapted or related or adjusted to the waves of the atmosphere. The lungs are adapted or related or adjusted to the air which they inhale. In each of these cases there is an objective reality corresponding to the particular organ—the sun, the waves of the atmosphere, the air with its oxygen. Shall we not likewise hold that there is an objective Reality corresponding to man's spiritual faculty, his power of perceiving the divine? It would seem as reasonable to say that man imagines the existence of the sun as to say that he imagines the existence of God.

But we are not to think of God as external to and remote from humanity; on the contrary, the idea of the immanence of God, of God dwelling and reigning in his whole universe, in the spiritual realm as fully as in the material, and in our human world as truly as in any other world—this idea is a distinguishing truth of modern theology. The power, wisdom and goodness of God pervade all creation, pervade and control humanity; in the ocean of the divine Life our human lives subsist—as St. Paul said at Athens, "In him we live and move and have our being." This thought of an indwelling Spirit, filling the outlying cosmos

and filling humanity, which was characteristic of the Greek theology in the early Christian centuries, was essentially foreign to the Roman cast of mind, and so was obscured by the Latin theology for fifteen hundred years; but has been rediscovered and evaluated with profound and far-reaching consequences. In the light of this truth we no longer conceive of the Deity as dwelling in some remote part of his universe, too pure to have contact with corrupt matter, and governing our human world somewhat as a Roman emperor governed one of his distant provinces, by sending a procurator or vicegerent into it; but rather we think of him as the all-pervading Light, Life and Love of every realm, the inner Spirit upspringing in our human souls, the "Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness"—the immanent God, who is in his world, who does not leave it nor forsake it, and who ever works within it toward the accomplishment of his own vast and blessed purposes. So Jesus could say in strict truthfulness, "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works"; and so Paul could say, "It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to work, for his good pleasure."

Because of this great twofold truth of the essential kinship of man with God, and of the immanence of God in humanity, modern theology sees that the real unity of the world is ultimately a

spiritual unity, and that the hope of the world is in God — the hope of human progress, the hope of democracy, the hope of Christianity, the hope even of immortality. All this is grounded in the double thought that man is the spiritual child of God, and that God is “in his world” as well as “in his heaven.”

2. From the foregoing considerations, presenting the noblest conception of humanity and the most exalted, inspiring conception of Deity, and postulating their essential kinship, it follows that some communion between man and God is both possible and natural. For since man is the child of God by nature, made in his image, created in his likeness, he must inevitably have aspirations and apprehensions which bring him at last to spiritual self-consciousness. Such self-consciousness leads the unfolding life of a human soul into some knowledge of divine truth, some acquaintance with God, just as surely as the unfolding life of a little child brings it at length to understand its own individuality and at the same time to understand its human parents. There is no miracle or mystery about it, except as all life is, in a sense, mysterious and miraculous. We are children of God by nature: what more natural than that we should grow up to know him as our heavenly Father? The experience of millions in the twentieth century

reaffirms that of a few thousands in the first century in pointing to Jesus Christ as the one great teacher who helps us thus to grow and learn, thus to find our way to God, thus to come into conscious spiritual harmony with the infinite Spirit of the universe. He it is, above all others, who touches "dead" souls, souls in the stupor of ignorance and sin, and makes them live; he it is who most surely arouses all the higher faculties, expands all the nobler capacities, deepens and purifies all the finer sensibilities, and thus brings one by his own living experience to *know* that he is a spiritual being, and to *know* that worship, prayer, faith, penitence, pardon, are blessed stages in the life which links him with God.

Man is not an alien or an outcast in the courts of the Most High, but is veritably a child of his everlasting Love. Hence it is profoundly true that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God"; "and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Hence also it is forever possible for man, in spite of his imperfection and waywardness, to hear some of the tones of that cry of the divine Spirit, reminding him of his heavenly parentage.

"Man cannot be God's outlaw if he would,  
Nor so abscond him in the caves of sense,  
But Nature still shall search some crevice out



With messages of splendor from that Source  
Which, dive he, soar he, baffles still and lures."<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, since man is the spiritual child of God, not metaphorically but actually, the relationship subsisting between the two is necessarily vital and reciprocal—they are forever seeking each other, as the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures represent. Indeed, this is the sublime spectacle of the ages; the spectacle of God seeking man, seeking to make himself known to his child, seeking to break through the clouds of animality, ignorance and sin, enshrouding the human soul, with the light of his ineffable truth and love; and likewise the spectacle of man seeking God, "if haply he might feel after him and find him"—man ever aspiring, yearning, wondering, doubting, fearing, hoping, praying, and thus groping and climbing

"Upon the great world's altar-stairs  
That slope through darkness up to God!"

This is the inner, deeper meaning of all Bibles and cults, all creeds and pieties, all theology and philosophy. God in his overbrooding and eternal love is always yearning to draw his children closer to himself, into a deeper, purer conscious communion with him; while these children, imperfect and erring, are yet secretly hungering and thirsting after God, "the living God," even though they

<sup>1</sup> Lowell, *The Cathedral*.

do not know it — all and simply because, as Augustine said, God has made them for himself, and their hearts are restless till they rest in him.

Communion with God may be broadly defined as a sharing of God's life; and this has many aspects. We experience such a sharing in various ways, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes with a clear and joyous consciousness.

1. The very life we live, our sentient existence here, is a partial sharing of God's life. We need to enter as few of us have done into the great thought that human life is really ensphered in the divine Life, to *realise* that "in him we live and move and have our being." We live because the supreme Life has begotten us; and every breath we draw, every degree of energy we expend, every recuperation we gain, is all a part of the flowing of God's life through us. Surely we should think of it most reverently and gratefully.

2. It is equally true that we share the world with God. The universe is his dwelling-place, and it is ours; this earth is now our home, and it is part of our Father's house. Shall we live here day by day, in his house and ours, and never think of him? Shall we see all the beauty and glory of the world, and forget that he is the Author of it? Shall we eat of the fruits of his fields, sit at his table, partake of his bounty, and neglect to say in our hearts



a word of thoughtful thanksgiving? Our sharing of God's fair and rich abode should be both intelligent and devout.

3. Again, we share the life of God somewhat in our daily labour. Jesus said, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." Whenever we do an honest day's work, an honest and useful task, we thereby become "labourers together with God." We may not think about it, but we are really in some true fellowship with him when we are finishing the work which he gave us to do, whatever that work may be. God is our Creator; and when we create or produce anything good or beautiful — be it a house, a loaf of bread, a book, or a picture, — only so that it be sincere and worthy, we are his co-creators. Thus may we dignify our homely toil, and link our hard, work-a-day life into communion with him whose creative processes go on unceasingly.

4. We may rise to a higher plane. We are endowed with faculties and capacities which make it possible for us to be sharers of God's thought. The human mind is the most wonderful thing we know. And the mind of man by growing knowledge comes to find traces in the vast universe of a greater Mind. As man finds himself enabled, little by little, to read the language of this greater Mind, he feels that he is brought into a wonderfully inspiring and solemn communion with

Almighty God; and he bursts forth in Kepler's reverent ejaculation, "Great God, I think thy thoughts after thee!" To acquire true knowledge, to understand the world, to exercise our powers of reflection and comprehension, to lift our souls on the wings of thought into a joyous vision of the meaning of the universe—this is to know something of the mind of the Maker of all things, and is to find our way through Nature to God by the path of intelligence.

5. Still another path is that of goodness, virtue, righteousness. We are moral beings, living under moral law; what we call conscience is the inner, potent, constant witness to this fact; we can neither flout it nor forget it except at our peril. To give due heed to its promptings and restraints, to obey its behests, to be guided by its sacred light, and so to live a good, true and pure life, experiencing the strength of integrity and the joy of holiness—this is the broadest, clearest, surest way by which any soul may come into communion with God. If we live a life of thoughtful and active goodness, of justice and benevolence, we *are* in communion with God most really and certainly.

6. There is yet another way, or another account of the same way, indicated by the word *love*. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," said the author of the First Epistle of John; who also said, "No man

hath seen God at any time; if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." A holy, unselfish love in the soul, directed toward God in reverent trust and gladsome prayer, and also directed toward man in sympathy and kindness, is the open way, full of sunshine, by which we may come into harmony and blessed communion with God. There is no doubt about it, and little mystery. God has made the way of our approach to him so simple that a child may find and follow it—the way of a hallowed, sincere and faithful love; and when philosophy and science and creeds and rituals may search for him in vain, he may be found revealing himself most beautifully to the meek and lowly in heart who have learned to love in deed and in truth.

7. Other ways, still, of finding God, other paths of approach to him, need only to be named: the way of genuine, earnest prayer; the uplifting power of true worship; the sweet suggestions of beauty; and the inspiring influence of great human personalities. All these are so many additional media of communion between the finite spirit, man, and the infinite Spirit whom we reverently call God.

"O Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul on thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.

“O Light that followest all my way,  
I yield my flickering torch to thee;  
My heart restores its borrowed ray,  
That in thy sunshine’s blaze its day  
May brighter, fairer be.”

In conclusion it is to be observed that, as humanity thus enters into the higher and richer experiences of the spiritual life, finding an increasing confirmation of its faith in God, and an ever-clearer consciousness of communion with him, it becomes able at length, as far as in this world is possible, to interpret his character and providence, and to interpret the hard facts of experience, in terms of a heavenly Father’s wisdom, goodness and love. For we are bound by the logic of our nature to reason from the highest and best in man to what *must* belong to the character of the Supreme Being. This was the method of Jesus, who said, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!” And with equal truthfulness Whittier wrote,

“Nothing can be good in him  
Which evil is in me.”

As humanity rises in the scale of moral character, faith in the benevolence of God inevitably increases; until finally the dark vestiges of every primitive superstitious belief concerning the Deity give place to a sublime conviction that the govern-

ment of One who is perfectly righteous is necessarily pledged to the ultimate triumph of good over evil throughout his creation; until also it is seen that the whole human world, with each individual human life, rests back at last upon the everlasting Love. Against that Love "the gates of hell shall not prevail"—no accident, no disaster, no misdoing, neither the things of this world nor the things of the world to come, can get beyond the divine Control, or can permanently thwart the eternal purpose of God to crown with glory and honour the souls that he has made in his own image.

And so modern theology culminates in a great hope, hope for all mankind—in the first place, for this present world, a strong hope that the nations, in spite of degenerative influences, will continue to struggle onward and upward toward a higher state of civilisation, and that in the process war and crime and disease, ignorance and pauperism and needless suffering will be overcome and eliminated; in the second place, "a living hope" that each individual who goes out of this world does not go out of existence, but passes into one of the other "mansions" of our Father's House, into some other realm where his educative, disciplinary providence still rules, and chastens, and redeems.

"O yet we trust that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill,

*Getting Together*

To pangs of nature, sins of will,  
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

“That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
That not one life shall be destroy’d,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete.”

WILLARD CHAMBERLAIN SELLECK.

### III

## TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE, HUMAN AND DIVINE





### III

## TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE, HUMAN AND DIVINE

THESE great words have long been familiar to theologian and to philosopher; they are now passing into the vocabulary of the common people; shall the man in the street understand them? The present writer has no mission either to theologian or to philosopher in this matter; he writes for the layman. If the layman would understand these words, he must take note of one preliminary warning. The ideas suggested by Transcendence and Immanence must be kept in close union with each other. Like "outer" and "inner" they are not two facts so much as two aspects of one fact. They are two points of view regarding one living pulse of experience. To separate them in thought is to enter into classic difficulties which stand as warnings in the history of religious philosophy. The truth can only be found in their union. As Robert Browning says in "Paracelsus" of Knowledge and Love, they are "two halves of one dis-severed world." The grand mistake in the past has been their disseverance, the raising of a logical

distinction into a real difference. To assert Transcendence in such a way as to exclude Immanence is to become embroiled in the insoluble difficulties of deism; it is to remove God so far away from his world that he cannot be brought into touch with it save by a *tour de force*. On the other hand, to assert Immanence in such a way as to exclude Transcendence is to come to flounder in the morasses of pantheism; it is to identify God with his world so mathematically that we cannot get him free. Long stretches of history are compressed into this statement; but the mere statement must suffice us here. In logical analysis of experience the objective may be separated out from the subjective elements; each may be studied in this artificial isolation; but the "two halves" must be synthesised again if the whole truth of the experience is to be gained.

In what follows we shall endeavour to keep the union of these two ideas, Transcendence and Immanence, clearly before our readers. One has no existence, save as a logical thought-form, apart from the other. Each involves the other.

As applied to religious and spiritual experience, these words are figures of speech. Not to recognise this is to make a false start. They suggest spatial relationships. The figure involved may be developed on this wise. The hundred bays and gulfs and creeks which succeed each other round the shore

are in the ocean, and the ocean is in them; between them and the ocean there is correspondence and communication; there may be peculiar local movements in the bay, but there are movements also which depend upon and are controlled by — which indeed are — the movement of the outlying ocean itself. Although the ocean is present in each bay, the sum total of bays and gulfs and creeks and estuaries do not make up the ocean; it ever lies beyond them. That is a static view of transcendence and immanence. If conscious experience could be attributed to one of the bays, then in the hours of the inflowing or of the ebbing tide it would get something corresponding to the proper dynamic view of these concepts. Just as the bay of Naples is part of the Mediterranean sea, is in the sea, and the sea is in it; and just as that wider sea is part of the great ocean which is in touch with it at more points than one, and stretches out afar; so there are You, and Humanity, and God. The life of humanity transcends your life, as the whole transcends the part; yet also is it immanent in you, as the whole is present in every part;

“ You are that Whole which Nature is, but you are that Whole in your own peculiar way ”;

and out beyond the sea of humanity there rolls the limitless ocean of God, ever immanent, ever transcendent.

This is an elaboration of the figure which is compressed into the terms Transcendence and Immanence. In their primary, etymological significance they are spatial, physical terms. Transcendence is out-beyond-ness; Immanence is within-ness. Now under such interpretation the words are not applicable to Spirit, nor to God who is Spirit. Popular thought, imagining the spiritual universe after the fashion of the physical, building up a geography of the Unseen with the up-and-down, right-and-left notions of three-dimensional space, has usually taken the figure for the reality. Hence the conception of God as actually existing "up above the clouds so high"; he has been given a position outside and beyond the created universe. Similarly God has been thought of as indwelling man by his Spirit, much in the same way as the invisible breath pervades the body. So also has the soul been conceived of as tabernacling within the body, sometimes in a particular part, sometimes as a kind of inner lining of excessively refined substance following the body's shape. Such a notion is tenable only on the supposition that the soul is constituted of superfine material, capable—as is alleged in some quarters—of being actually weighed. If, however, we assume that the phenomena of moral and religious consciousness arise through the association with matter, somehow or other, of that which is non-material, then any set of spatial and

physical terms will be altogether inadequate for its expression. We had better, therefore, leave the ocean and its bays behind us, and try for another figure.

Personality is always immanent and transcendent at the same time in respect of personal life and character. In his life of daily thoughts and words and deeds, a man embodies, expresses, himself. It is his life, as distinct from any one else's, because he is in it; it is an expression of him. But although his whole personality is partially expressed in his daily thoughts and actions, it is never wholly expressed in any act or in any thought, or in any career of action or system of thought. Life is a process of self-realisation; but we never perfectly realise our selves; there is always more behind and beyond than we can possibly embody in actual life. A man's life is a real expression of himself, but never a whole expression of himself. He is always in it, but he always transcends it. When Victor Hugo said,

"For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose, verse, history, philosophy, drama, romance, satire, ode, song. I have tried all; but I feel I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave, I can say, like so many others, 'I have finished my day's work'; but I cannot say 'I have finished my life.' My day's work will begin again next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare; it closes in the twilight to open with the dawn,"

he was telling forth the experience of every one in whom anything worthy of the name of personality has arisen. The history of our personal life is the history of the gradual incarnation of personality in actual living; but at no point or period of our life is the full personality, the full-orbed man, completely expressed. There is always more to be embodied; and the area of personality is at any moment much wider than the area of actual consciousness. It will be noticed that we have dropped, almost in spite of ourselves, into the use once more of spatial terms. We speak of "more," and of "wider area"; we can scarcely get along without the use of these quantitative symbols, but we must persistently see through them. The experience is this:

Those acts in which we are most self-conscious give us the indubitable impression of arising under the urge and pressure of a Somewhat, which (without prejudice to psychological theories) we may legitimately call our whole personality. This is essentially energetic, explosive, self-expressive, constantly manifesting in forms of actuality, but never attaining on this finite plane a self-manifestation in the fulness of its "grace and truth." The postulate of individual immortality, as in Hugo's words just quoted, founds upon this inward urge. It is the formulation of a deep and insistent experience. It is the assertion that the limits of a



seventy-years' life are too narrow for the full expression of ourselves; and the correlative demand that it must be through those selves of which we are now aware that any further and fuller expression shall be mediated.

When we attribute personality to God we usually describe what we mean in terms of self-consciousness, intelligence, and the will to goodness. The most dynamic aspect of it is omitted until we add that conception of personality at which I have now hinted; it is a whole, unitary, spiritual life which, by its very nature, evermore seeks fuller self-expression in joy; breaking through, thrusting itself up into, manifold phenomenal forms, the highest of which only partly expresses the fulness of the original primal Reality. It is like M. Bergson's notion of the Superconscious, pouring itself by spontaneous energy into a many-chambered, many-tunnelled mine; issuing here in the instinct of animals, there in the intellect of man, and in the moral and religious consciousness giving promise of still greater things to be, and making use of all manner of material resistance in order to elicit out of itself more than is actually there; that is, to create. Transcendence is symbolised in this primal spontaneous eternal up-thrust towards self-expression on the part of the Whole; and Immanence is symbolised by the inward energising of the communicated, inpoured life. It is not true to

say that a fragment of the whole is present in each part; rather is the Whole vitally and energetically present in each fragmentary manifestation of itself.

A further illustration may simplify the matter a little. A man does a piece of work; let us say, he makes a chair. Before he starts to make his chair, there is in his mind the idea of the chair he is going to make. The design is preimagined in the mind. Associated with this idea, and largely determining it, is the purpose which will be more or less realised when the chair is made. He may make it for a certain use. He may make it as a sample of a particular type of furniture. As it exists in his mind, it is a perfect chair for the purpose; that is to say, it is an ideal chair. The chair he makes is neither perfect to the design, nor ideal to the purpose, because the material is in some degree intractable, and the man's skill comes short. He cannot build as well as he knows, or as truly as he intends. And yet, although the actual chair is an imperfect expression of his ideal chair, it is an expression of it; it does embody the idea and the ideal up to a limit. The ideal chair is imperfectly embodied in the actual chair that is made. The ideal is immanent in the thing actually fabricated. It is also transcendent; and although a man might make many chairs, each one better than the last, the ideal chair will continually transcend any actual mani-

festation, and urge him to repeated attempts. Here the new content of the notions of transcendence and immanence is apparent. We have eliminated the spatial element. The dynamic aspect is more plain. No one suggests that the ideal chair lies within the actual chair like a skeleton or framework; or that it lies outside of it, as the invisible mass of water-vapour surrounds the dew-drop which has been deposited from it. There is no suggestion of our being able to weigh the ideal embodied in the actual chair! There is no spatial relationship at all. The actual chair has been made under the urge of the ideal chair in the mind; the ideal is transcendent in that sense. The actual chair is a phenomenal manifestation of the ideal which, in that sense, is immanent.

Apply this figure. Humanity is the creation of God. Present to the creative Mind in the eternal act of creation there must be the image, so to speak, of ideal humanity. This will be an element in the divine self-consciousness which is the necessary background of all its creative self-expressions in Love. The purpose of creation is to realise this ideal. The ideal is never realised, because the expression of it is always subject to the limitations of finitude. The actual approaches the ideal after the fashion of the asymptotic curve familiar in mathematics; it ever approximates; it never coincides. Every fragment of humanity is to some

extent an expression of the ideal; the ideal is immanent there, always immanent, immanent everywhere; but the best and the highest man or community of men comes short of the ideal. The best actual man fails of the ideal man. The ideal humanity "which is in heaven" always transcends the actual progressive manifestation of itself on earth; and it is the perpetually active urge of this ideal which makes possible the whole creational process issuing in humanity. It is its final cause, the end which is in the beginning.

There are two important things to be said about an ideal. The first is this; it is essentially dynamic. We speak of a man pursuing an ambition, or straining to reach it; and we figure it as a "flying point of bliss remote," or as a "happiness in store afar." Yet it is often difficult to say whether a man is pursuing an ambition, or whether his ambition is ondriving him. Which is the hunter, and which is the hunted? Through years of patient plodding labour, through a multitude of plans and designs accepted, rejected, persevered with, cast on one side; by methods made wiser and more effective if he can; over obstacles and the many bafflements of obstacles; by perilous climb, or diligent circumvention; sometimes roughshod over what in his heart he wishes were not obstacles; careful of means, careless of means; extending his grasp, and

his reach ever beyond it; in threat of health, in despite of failure, in hope, in despair; making many sacrifices, contending, striving, not content with any lower achievement; on to the goal! Which is the huntsman, and which the quarry? Is the man master of his fate, or is his fate master of the man? Is it the goal that draws him, or is it desire that drives him? Does the man ride his desire, or does his desire ride the man?

“As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks,  
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.”

Is God the refreshing fountain which the soul seeks, or is God the thirst which impels the soul to seek it? Similarly we figure the seeker after truth as a hunter who pursues a rare and elusive bird. How eagerly, diligently, persistently, stubbornly, men will seek for truth. It cannot be just a fad, or an affection. There is an imperiousness in the search for truth which hints at the existence of some tremendous insistent authority. A man investigates in order to gather facts; he tabulates facts; he scrutinises them; he analyses them with the concentration of a merciless intellect; he conducts innumerable experiments; he formulates hypothesis after hypothesis, testing each with unswerving rigour; he will tear at the roots of theories and doctrines, even when in so doing he tears also at the roots of the hearts of men; he will cast his

most precious things into the crucible; he will not spare the knife; he will probe deep; nothing will be sacred to him; he will forsake long-held positions won at great cost; his own children will he leave behind; out into the untracked darkness he will go, and will sail uncharted seas. Here is not an intellectual hobby. The man is not running a hobby; it looks much more as if something were running him! It cannot be that the man is just interested in the problem of the rationality or the unity of the universe; much rather is it as if the inherent rationality of the universe has got hold of this man, is using him, is thrusting itself up into the light through him. That saying of Pascal, so profound that it can never become familiar,

"Thou would'st not be seeking Me, hadst thou not already found Me,"

helps us towards the root of the matter. We seek the truth because the truth has already found us. We reach out to it, because already it has hold of us. And the seeker after truth is not simply under the fascination of an intellectual exercise; he is under the driving-power of a spirit which has possession of him; is behind him, urgent, as the chariotteer is behind the driven steeds. In a familiar passage St. Paul regards his life-movement as being, from one point of view, the reaching out to gain a prize; from another point of view it is his being



ondriven by a divine purpose which has him in its grip; a "Love which will not let me go." Even so it is with the ideal. We figure it statically as a height above us towards which we aspire. We try to act so as to get nearer to it as a man mounts a steep mountain road. We push aside every substitute for it, every lower competitor, and faithfully strain towards it. We seek companionship with it in the books we read, in the friendships we form, through the labours we undergo, and the things which we suffer. We press through the crowd of hindering things to touch even the hem of its garment. Is the ideal, then, something which we seek, or is it something which urges and impels us? Is it something which lies before the soul, or something which lies so deeply within that it might be said to lie behind the soul? Is it something we are singling out, or something which is in process of singling us out? Have we chosen it, or is it choosing us? Is it the object which creates the desire, or is it the desire which creates the object? Is it a call, or is it an urge? Is it an allurements, or is it a challenge? Is it an inducement, or is it a compulsion? We may say that it must be something as external to us as the mountain peak is to the climber, since we could abandon the quest if we wanted to. But could we abandon our ideal if we wished to? Could we abandon our ideal and yet remain ourselves? Would it not re-



vive under another form? Would it not break out, so to speak, in another place? After a period of quiescence, would it not lift up its head, shake from itself the waters of sleep, and lay hands on us again? The ideal is a vision; but was the vision hung up in the clouds before us as a schoolmaster places a model before his drawing-pupil? Or did the vision come from those depths that lie beneath and behind us, and, projecting itself, outshine there in the clouds? Is it not the projected image of that which is really within us? Is not our ideal, after all, our larger self, which, against every resistance and every enticement, must lift our whole round of life to its height? Is it not our "tremendous Lover," content with nothing short of union absolute and complete? It is this experience of the felt urge of the ideal, constant and imperious, which we interpret as its transcendence. And it is the experience of our gradual approximation to it, our deepening union with it, which we interpret as its immanence. Transcendence and immanence are chiefly symbols of experience.

The other thing to be said about the ideal is this. At every point where it acts the whole of it acts. This is the peculiar nature of Spirit, that the whole operates at every point. When you act normally, voluntarily, it is the whole You which acts. To revert to our figures — personality always operates as a whole; its full pressure is behind every self-

manifestation. One voluntary action involves the whole man. That which makes it a true voluntary action is the identification of the whole personality with one idea-system, or with one set of motives. However feeble a representation of the ideal chair may be given in any actual chair, the result is due, nevertheless, to the operation of the fulness of the ideal, seeking expression under the resistance of difficult material, or under the limitation of incompetence in handicraft. Personality cannot be departmentalised; parts cannot be switched off, or on. We cannot say that a man's goodness acts to-day, and his badness to-morrow; or that this particular act is the result of his illumination, and that of his ignorance. Each and every act is the outcome of the operation of his whole personality under the sum of attendant conditions. What you are at any moment is the effect of the reaction of your whole personality in its wholeness upon your environment, past, present, and future. It is not the eye that sees, it is the whole man that sees. Every assertion is a whole-self-assertion. You are in every act of yours; and if your acts differ from each other, it is only because the whole You is operating in them in different ways.

This is even true of physical nature. The life that is in a planted seed is not an isolated drop of Nature's life, enclosed in hard narrow boundaries,

flung out as it were to fend for itself. The whole of the natural cosmos is with it, and co-operates with it unto life. It is a focus-point of a whole life which is continuous throughout all forms. It is like that which has the appearance of being a flying fleece of cloud in the sky, but which in reality is the apex-point of an immeasurable mass of invisible water-vapour. So, as in Tennyson's familiar lines,

“ Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower, but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.”

Or as Francis Thompson puts it,

“ Nay, I affirm  
Nature is whole in her least things exprest,  
Nor know we with what scope God builds the worm.  
Our towns are copied fragments from our breast,  
And all man's Babylons strive but to impart  
The grandeurs of his Babylonian heart.”

The whole cosmos is present in power to the tiniest flower. The whole Spiritual Order is present in power of self-expression in that pulse of illumined social consciousness which, thrusting up into manifestation in the heart of the reformer, adds a new beauty to the common life.

This very essay provides us with a pertinent illustration. The words now passing before the

reader's eye do not fully express the thought in the writer's mind. The essay as a whole does not reveal the writer's whole thought upon the chosen subject. Yet it is true that every single word of all that has been written is the issue not simply of the thought he intends to articulate, or simply of the correlated thoughts that lie in the background of his mind as he writes, but of his whole mental content, conscious and subconscious, at the moment; and this includes the store garnered from education, memory, history, speculation, insight, imagination; it includes the assimilated substance of the thought of a myriad who have pondered on this and cognate subjects. Indeed, as you trace inward from the single thought-pulse which crystallises in a word or a phrase, you are led to discover that the whole thought-content of the Universe is involved. The whole mind operates in every thought. The Universal Mind operates in every thinker. This fact of the Whole being present and potent in each part has been expressed by Walt Whitman in a famous passage.

"I am an acme of things accomplished, and I an encloser of things to be.

My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs;

On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between the steps;

All below duly travelled, and still I mount and mount.

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me;

Afar down I see the huge first Nothing—I know I was even there;

I waited unseen and always, and slept through the lethargic mist,

And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon.

Long I was hugged close, long and long,

Immense have been the preparations for me,

Faithful and friendly the arms that have helped me.

Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen;

For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings;

They sent influences to look after what was to hold me;

Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me;

My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could overlay it.

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,

The long slow strata piled to rest it on,

Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,

Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths, and deposited it with care.

All forces have been steadily employed to complete and delight me;

Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul."

We are now in a position to see what these terms, transcendence and immanence, mean as applied to Deity. We must base upon experience; we must exercise that faith which "is the evidence of things not seen." We may theorise about God, but we can know him only in experience. If the universal is to be found anywhere, it must be in the experience of each particular. What experience have we of God? There seem to be two moments in it. In the first place, we are conscious of an inward urge; there is Something which drives the saint to prayer, and the reformer to unselfish enterprise; there is Something by reason of whose pull in one direction

we become conscious of the pull of what we call temptation in the opposite direction; there is Something whose authoritative presence we recognise in conscience; there is Something which "disturbs" us "with the joy of elevated thoughts; the sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused"; there is Something which in high moments impels us to act against all argument, all prudence, all self-interest, lifts us above calculation and above fear. Our consciousness of this is that while the point of contact between it and ourselves is inward, it is "a Power not ourselves." Yet our consciousness of its urge is qualitatively different from our consciousness of the coercive imposition of external authority. By every sign it is essentially kindred with us. It announces itself as being the truth of ourselves. This is our experience of the transcendence of God.

The other moment in our experience of God is this — an increasing sense of harmony, a deepening sense of peace and rest and joy. It is the peace which falls upon the rebel city when the king has broken down all resistance and entered in. It is the peace which follows when a conflict of wills has ended in the surrender of the lower to the higher, and the two now move as one. It is the peace which follows when the lover has cast aside the last reservation, and enthrones love in his heart without one rival thought or desire. It is the peace



which follows when the meaner purpose has been abandoned, and the nobler adopted. The narrower self-life has been taken up into the purifying, fulfilling embrace of the wider life. It is the joy which arises when the last barrier has gone down, and we are wholly self-given to the highest. It means the inflow of the fuller life. It means the richer indwelling of the truth within us. It is the arrival of the Master to his own, and his free welcome reception by his own. This is our experience of the immanence of God.

The transcendent God is the Will-to-self-expression; the immanent God is the presence of that Will incarnate in all that hath been made. The transcendent God is the Will-to-goodness; the immanent God is the realised goodness which illumines human hearts. The transcendent God is that Love which indwells all beings, whether individuals or communities, which it wills into life. The transcendent God is cause; the immanent God is effect; but cause and effect are one, and wherever the cause is fully present there is the effect also. The transcendent God is Reality self-urgent towards manifestation, an eternal Will to reveal Itself in phenomena; the immanent God is Reality so far as expressed.

It may not be within the purview of this essay to follow out the practical aspects of these considerations; but they may be hinted at. The Gos-



pel of Jesus flows from them. "I am in the Father"—there is the divine transcendence; "and the Father in me"—there is the divine immanence. "I and the Father are one"; "the Father is greater than I." Each life lies overshadowed, enfolded, embosomed in the Spiritual Whole which is God; eternity is our home; we "cannot drift beyond his love and care";

"The eternal God is thy refuge,  
And underneath are the everlasting arms."

That is the Gospel of the transcendent God. Within each life the divine Spirit dwells; the divine eternal Life is present, lifting us up to the heights, bringing our visions to pass, urging us to be "perfect even as your Father is perfect"; a Spirit guiding us "into all the truth," as a lamp within the breast; the promise and potency of all we long and pray for as dearest and most precious; the pledge of immortality amid mortality, of abundant life through every tribulation, and out of any death. That is the Gospel of the divine immanence. In social concerns that which we call, in modern phrase, solidarity is the social interpretation of the divine immanence; our social watchwords, Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, are, first of all, facts of the divine Life indwelling the community. We become free according as the immanent Divine takes fuller possession of us; we are

equal because we are spiritual brethren in an indivisible family; and we are brethren because we are "one in Christ." The urge which lies behind all social progress, which nerves the reformer, gives the poet his vision, quickens the social consciousness in the common heart, and contains within itself the promise of the "Kingdom of heaven upon earth," is the pressure of that Transcendent Life which, since itself is beautiful, pure, holy, must create for itself forms of perfect love.

EDWARD W. LEWIS.

#### IV

### THE NATURAL AND THE SUPER- NATURAL



## IV

### THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL

THE first and third of these essays have prepared the way for a discriminating and clear presentation of a subject which, in view of inveterate and prevailing notions of it, might seem to be in charge of a society for the propagation of darkness.

A veteran theologian whose works have made him widely known in this and foreign lands, the late William Newton Clarke, of Colgate University, connects the subject closely with his discussion of Transcendence and Immanence in his last and greatest work.<sup>1</sup> "This truth of the transcendent God immanent in his universe helps us to see what is really meant by the distinction, familiar, but not easily defined, between the natural and the supernatural."

Our first step toward a clear insight is to rid the supernatural of the degradation put on it by current usage in identifying it with the miraculous. The fact that this word is regularly applied only

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 339.—Scribners, New York.

to wonderful phenomena observed by the physical senses should tag it as appropriate only to an order of nature lower than that which the word *supernatural* envisages. With this provisional remark as a premiss to what is to be said for the miraculous on another page our immediate interest is in the supernatural.

Here what young students of geometry have been introduced to as a *pons asinorum* has to be crossed at the outset of endeavour to separate truth from error.

The compound word super-natural includes two distinct concepts — the natural, and that which is “super,” *i. e.*, above it. *Above* is a term of double meaning, ambiguous; it may mean *outside of*, it may mean *superior*; it may refer to aboveness in *space*, it may refer to aboveness in *quality*. Thus ambiguous is the word super-natural; we may mean by it what is outside of nature, superior in space, or what is inside of nature, superior in quality. It is the latter to which the line of thought in the two essays named points as the true meaning. It is this on which Professor Clarke insists. After commenting on the failure of all attempts to draw a satisfactory deciding line between the natural and the supernatural he thus concludes:

“The trouble is that the dividing line has been drawn too low. It has been assumed that the

universe, the creation of God, could be divided into two parts, of which one could intelligibly be called natural and the other supernatural. . . . It is impossible to define the natural by division of the world. There is no place at which the created universe can be thus bisected. In no tolerable sense is it true that some part of God's creation possesses supernaturalness together with God. There is no place to draw such a line through the sum-total of existence, except between what we have called the two units, the universe and God. God is alone in his superiority to all besides, and all that is below him forms a single class. What is really meant by the supernatural is God himself, and by the natural that which he does or produces. The natural is the universe and what it contains in its manifold aspects of dependent existence. The supernatural is God who alone is greater. God lives in the universe and the universe lives in God. The common order is animated by the living will. . . . A leaf, we say, is a product of nature, and an illustration of nature's method. So it is, but it is just as truly a product of supernature, and an expression of God.<sup>1</sup> The tree that bears it is rooted in the ground, and is rooted in God. In the natural leaf, which is one of the vehicles of the energizing will, the supernatural shines forth. What is true of a leaf is true in like manner of a bird in the air, a child in

<sup>1</sup> The same thought is in Tennyson's lines: "Flower in the crannied wall."—EDITOR.



the cradle, and a saint in heaven. That which lies back of the ever-present mystery of nature is the only God, the sole fount of power, the true and only supernatural. In his transcendence he is above nature, and by his immanence he makes nature what it is.”<sup>1</sup>

In other words: the real supernatural is the *spiritual*, the invisible energy within the mechanism of material nature, the living “Spirit in the wheels” of the ancient prophetic vision.<sup>2</sup> We have to choose between this conclusion and the notion which theologians in an unconsciously deistic line of thought are not yet rid of, that the supernatural resides outside of the natural. Of this, and its practical removal of God from within the wheels of nature, the late Professor Borden P. Bowne, of Boston University, has said:

“In popular thought, religious and irreligious alike, the natural is supposed to be something that runs itself without any internal guidance or external interference. The supernatural, on the other hand, if there be any such thing, is not supposed to manifest itself through the natural, but by means of portents, prodigies, interpositions, departures from, or infractions of, natural order in general. The realm of law belongs to the natural, and the natural runs itself. Hence, if we are to find anything supernatural we must look for it in the ab-

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 340, 341.

<sup>2</sup> *Ezekiel* i, 20.

normal, the chaotic, the lawless, or that which defies all reduction to order that may be depended on. This notion underlies the traditional debate between naturalism and supernaturalism. . . . This unhappy misconception of the relation of the natural to the supernatural has practically led the great body of uncritical thinkers into the grotesque inversion of all reason — the more law and order, the less God.”<sup>1</sup>

None who fails to cross that *pons asinorum* in the meaning of an ambiguous word to the truth that the real supernatural is the spiritual, escapes the dualism which has so long darkened thought by its separation of God from the world, and confounded morals by its separation of the sacred from the secular. In this dualistic, deistic way of thinking the One Reality that unifies the universe is broken into separate halves — natural and supernatural, matter and mind, secular and sacred, human nature and divine nature, finite nature and nature infinite, and a Christ so inconceivably composite of the two that controversialists on one side have separated him from humanity, and on the other side from deity. In the recovered unity of thought we find mind in matter, the supernatural or spiritual in the natural, the infinite in the finite, and very God in very man. The long battle between rationalism and supernaturalism, which

<sup>1</sup> *Zion's Herald*, Boston, U. S., August 22, 1900.

deism provoked and cannot end, theism ends in their reconciliation, by showing the supernatural to be no intruder into the rational order of the world, but its primal source and its deepest meaning.

Professor Clarke's remarks on this point are here appropriate, both as supplementary to Essays I and III, and as equally pertinent to some subjects to be discussed in others that follow this:

“A truth so central as the immanence of the transcendent God cannot fail to dictate throughout the entire field of doctrine. By its own nature it presses in to the definitions that belong alike to theology and to the common thoughts of men. Where it is not influential to-day it is certain to be to-morrow. In view of it, creation was not a work of days, undertaken, performed, and finished, followed by cessation and rest. Creation is the productive outflow of the Divine energy, normal to to God, limitless in time, conditioned only by his nature and will.<sup>1</sup> Providence is not a series of interpositions, in which God's world is touched and retouched by his special power in order to better the work of the general method. Providence is the perpetual governance of the indwelling Lord and Friend, no part of whose world is ever without his presence and care. Revelation is not a special work in a special field, mediated by messages, attended by attesting miracles, limited to a

<sup>1</sup> Compare the saying of Jesus: “My Father worketh even until now.” *John* v, 17. R. V.

certain time, completed and not to be renewed. Revelation equally includes the continuous, infinitely varied, and endless manifestation of the transcendent God through his indwelling, and all more special expressions of himself that he may make. Salvation is not an exceptional gift from afar, but the characteristic working-out of the eternal divinity of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit is the fulfilment of the ideal of existence.”<sup>1</sup>

What now of the miraculous — a word literally meaning the wonderful? The provisional remark on this already made now requires fuller statement of its proper meaning. Matthew Arnold's fantastic explanation of it by his supposition of a pen changed into a pen-wiper is simply as amusing but nonsensical as some newspaper cartoons of a political antagonist. He derived it honestly enough from theologians who inherited the idea of miracle introduced by philosophic schoolmen in the Middle Ages. These sharply divided the natural from the supernatural precisely as described by Professor Bowne in the passage quoted on a preceding page. Professor William Adams Brown, of Union Theological Seminary, New York, comments thus on their philosophy of miracle:

“In modern times two causes have combined to render this conception of miracle unsatisfac-

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 342, 343.

tory. The first is scientific, the second religious. With the enlarged conception of nature to which modern science has led, men's confidence in their ability to make the distinction required by the older theology has been undermined. So much once thought miraculous in the older sense has been brought under law that we do not see how we can be sure of any conceivable event that it is 'beyond the power of created nature.'"<sup>1</sup>

On the religious difficulty with the scholastic philosophy of miracle—that the proper evidence of any truth cannot be found in a fact of another kind, and that spiritual truth must be certified by spiritual rather than by physical facts—Professor Brown remarks as follows:

“With our clearer perception of the rational character and moral consistency of God we no longer recognise the religious significance of acts of mere power, even if they could be proved. A God who is moral and spiritual, as we believe the Christian God to be, can make himself known only through evidence which is itself moral and spiritual.”<sup>2</sup>

Our way is now cleared of mediæval fallacy for a conception of miracle conformable to modern

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Theology in Outline*, p. 226.—Scribners, New York.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

thought both scientific and religious. It is thus stated by Professor Brown:

“A miracle is an extraordinary event in nature or in human life, the explanation of which religion finds in a special divine purpose connected with revelation. Every religion which has a personal God assumes such events, and sees in them evidences of God’s interest in and care for man. Christianity is no exception. . . . It is not on the philosophical but on the religious side that the distinctive contribution of Christianity to the idea of miracle is to be found. This consists, first, in the subordination of the merely marvellous to the moral and the spiritual; secondly, in the clear perception that, whatever powers may be possessed by other spirits, the final control rests with the good God whom Christianity reveals.”<sup>1</sup>

Our concern is only with the miracles narrated in the Bible. Of these some are evidently legendary, *e. g.*, the ass that spoke to Balaam, the saints that came forth from their tombs after Jesus’ resurrection. Others — *e. g.*, works of healing, and the fording of the Red Sea and the Jordan, have been brought by modern discoveries within the range of natural law, and still others are likely to be thus accounted for.<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to draw

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Theology in Outline*, pp. 223, 224.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the miraculous raisings of the dead



any hard-and-fast line between the miraculous and the non-miraculous. Thus in an historical view miracle appears to be an elastic word, its applicability to an extraordinary occurrence varying with understanding of its cause or causes and power to reproduce it.

Miracle is our one synonym for several Greek words all connoting, as miracle does, a wonderful event, but also, as miracle does not, its various significance. This is appropriately expressed in the terms of the English version—"mighty works" (*δυνάμεις*, literally, *powers*), "signs" (*σημεῖα*), "wonders" (*τέρατα*, strictly meaning portentous prodigies). Here we come to a fruitful line of thought.

A hundred years ago Zerah Colburn, a child eight years old, born of humble parents in Vermont, solved this question in half a minute: "How many seconds in 1811 years?" For years he performed such extraordinary mathematical feats, but his power failed as he came to manhood. This year in Ceylon another such boy, of the primitive Tamil race—age not given—solved this among other problems translated into his dialect in presence of the Ceylon branch of the Royal Asiatic Society: "A man gave to 173 persons a bushel of rice each: each bushel contained 3,431,272

see Chapter III of my little book, *Miracles and Supernatural Religion*.—Sturgis & Walton Company, New York.



grains: the donor stipulated that 17 per cent. should be given to the temple. How many grains did the temple receive?" In three seconds the correct answer was given: 100,913,709.52.<sup>1</sup> We call such feats prodigies rather than miracles, since they are arithmetically achieved, but the distinction is verbal rather than real. The inexplicable, irreproducible fact that at any time may have to be left for the time as an unsolved wonder under the name of miracle is of that sort — the natural product of an extraordinary endowment of life. More of this may yet be latent in common men in the subconscious depths of being than has yet flashed forth in the life of uncommon men.

The works of which any man is naturally capable are conditioned by his vital endowment of power to employ natural force and law. We have not yet been able to eviscerate our own prosaic and matter-of-fact times of unexplained marvels of power, whose secret lies in the ungauged potency of that Force of forces whose name is *life*. How then can we consistently hold that no such marvels in ancient records are historical realities, or, that the record, however embellished by the reporter, is not, at least, founded on fact?

<sup>1</sup>Quoted from *The Independent*, New York, October 17, 1912. In view of such phenomena the assertion that "the riddle of life" can be solved in terms of physics and chemistry needs extra-strong support from the will to believe.

These considerations tend to confirm that conception of miracle which the limitations that appear on the face of the historical record have already suggested. In general it is an elastic term, in particular it is a provisional term, narrowing with the expanding range of human knowledge and power, which for the time it transcends; a term whose history in its record of ranges already transcended prompts to expectation that ranges still beyond may be transcended as "the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns." There will always be a *Beyond*, in which dwells the secret of laws undiscovered and mysteries unsolved. A hint of this was given by a profound thinker in the fifth century: "A portent [one of the Biblical terms for miracle] does not take place contrary to nature, but contrary to what is known of nature."<sup>1</sup>

Here we note that all the Biblical miracles are narrated of gifted men. Regarding miracle as the natural product of extraordinary vital power,<sup>2</sup> there is no source from which more light can be shed on its Biblical record than in those studies of the extraordinary phenomena and occult powers of life which have been scientifically prosecuted for thirty years by the Society for Psychical Research. For those who have followed this record the legend-

<sup>1</sup> Portentum non fit contra naturam, sed contra quam est nota natura." St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*.

<sup>2</sup> This is plainly intimated in *Mark* v, 30, R. V.

ary element in the Biblical narratives shrinks into smaller compass. While some holders to traditional views regard this result with the scepticism that Hume directed against those views, Mr. Gladstone answered their philistinism with the remark that "psychical research is by far the most important work that is being done in the world."

Miracles, then, *do* "happen." They have the same universality as life, the creator of nature, the director of the regular processes we term the laws of nature, the worker of the wonders in nature which men call miraculous, and ascribe to divine interference with nature because of their ignorance of what is in nature. Nor will the record of miracle ever be closed until the evolution of life has reached completion in perfected man, to whom nature throughout its deeps shall have become an open book. Nothing is more natural than life, and nothing is more supernatural. The one life that gives birth to all the successively emerging and vanishing phenomena of nature is the ever-flowing stream of an exhaustless spring, the transcendent Reality that eternally *is*, the Source of all that temporarily *appears*. The life of the world is filial to the Life of the world's Creator, and supernatural as he is supernatural. We may here borrow the phrases to which theologians of the fourth century gave a more limited meaning. In life's "eternal generation" from him it is "begotten, not made;

being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made." Thus, as Professor Clarke remarks, "we have to go no farther from home to find the supernatural than to meet the natural."<sup>1</sup>

The scholastic fallacy that thought to find the distinctive note of the supernatural in the drapery of physical marvels clinging to the Biblical record of the evolution of religion, and even conditions its value upon them—as if the vulgar notion that clothes make the man were true—has long wrought disaster to the claims of spiritual religion. It is of this false issue, which some theologians continue to present to science, that this essay has endeavoured to make riddance. It may fitly be concluded with the following statement by Professor Brown:

"If from one point of view the result of modern science has been steadily to diminish the area of the supernatural as compared with the natural, from another point of view it has brought about a corresponding enlargement. The insight that law is universal is matched by the insight that it is only in consciousness that we find law. Thus the supernatural receives its true meaning of the personal, and the false antithesis between nature and the supernatural is removed. The supernatural is the natural seen in its spiritual significance. The natural is the supernatural finding

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 341.

expression in forms which make possible the discovery of its permanent meaning and truth.”<sup>1</sup>

This and preceding statements express in slightly varying phrases one and the same truth: the supernatural is the spiritual. Nature, the visible world of changeful and transient form, is the embodiment of the

“living Will that shall endure  
When all that seems shall suffer shock,”

the creative and controlling Spirit of the indwelling God. Here, then, we reaffirm the conviction reached by Eucken: “The idea of God signifies to us nothing other than an Absolute Spiritual Life . . . constituting the substance of Reality . . . its foundation and apex.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Christian Theology in Outline*, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Essay I, p. 28.



V

THE LAW AND WILL OF GOD





## V

# THE LAW AND WILL OF GOD

### I.

THOUGHTFUL minds have found an enigma in the fact that it was an inhospitable world into which sensitive creatures were introduced by their Creator. Upon a globe whose surface earthquakes were rending, glaciers ploughing, floods inundating, tornadoes sweeping, thunderbolts smiting, volcanic fires bursting, inhabited by wild beasts ferocious, ravenous, venomous, man comes into being, feeble, unarmed, defenceless, to survive if he can. Hard conditions these, seemingly impracticable, yet have they been the making of him what he has thus far become by mastering them. In looking back upon the long struggle by which he has made himself master of his fate, he may say with a deeper meaning than the Hebrew bard first put into the words, "I have been wondrously made." It must have been his Creator's will to make him thus. In the long run "wisdom," as Jesus said, "is justified by her children."

Long before the advent of man the sensitive life

of lower creatures also had been struggling to survive under conditions equally rigorous. Nature was "red in tooth and claw with ravine" of the strong upon the weak, bisecting all her myriad tribes into eaters and the eaten. Yet a principle of conservation as well as of destruction was ever operating to secure the survival of the fittest. Life, gifting her children with an instinct and faculties of self-preservation, enabled them in various ways to live at the table spread for them in presence of their enemies — some by crafty concealment, some by swift flight, some by strenuous fight. Nevertheless, sooner or later, death reigned over both the eaters and the eaten, and last of all extended his dominion over man.

The spectacle of suffering and death presented in the history of physical life on our planet has always provoked question of its Creator's benevolence.

As to the suffering, the questioner has first to face the stiffer problem suggested by the idea of sensitive life not liable to pain. Where there is light there must also be shadow except in empty space. Sensitiveness to pleasure is inseparable from sensitiveness to its opposite. Vast as may seem the total mass of suffering, as tremendous when precipitated on the mind in one comprehensive glance as is the plunge of an avalanche from a snowy Alp, it is composed like that avalanche of

particles individually tiny and tolerable. The question before us must be divided. The problem of the suffering world is a question of particulars, one by one. Nor is there ground for much doubt that such pleasure as each individual of all the animal tribes is capable of is realised with comparatively less of pain till the mortal hour supervenes. And Nature has provided more anæsthetics than we imagine.

Do any who imagine God might have created a painless world seriously consider all that this means? Not only a world with no killing heats or frosts, no tornadoes, volcanoes, earthquakes, etc., but also beings incapable of hurt to flesh or bone by thorns or falls from roof or cliff, and incapable of errors and sins that would wound the hearts of their fellows—in short, a world that would require the structure of the material and moral universe to be other than it is. It is said that when the gifted Margaret Fuller had remarked, “I accept the universe,”<sup>1</sup> Carlyle commented, “Gad! she’d better.” Else it were better,

“Like birds the charming serpent draws,  
To drop head-foremost in the jaws  
Of vacant darkness, and to cease.”

<sup>1</sup> The ancient religion and ethics of China, as unfolded in its classic bibles, are based, says Professor De Groot, of Berlin, on “Universism,” accepting the natural order of the universe as prescribing the way of a happy life for man.—*The Religion of China*, p. 6 ff. Putnams, 1912.

Then as to death. Universal as birth, it is necessitated by birth. Room on the limited area of the habitable world for the generations continually incoming must be made by the departure of generations continually outgoing. Said a Jesuit father, "It is the cradle that makes the grave necessary." But for continuous death not sustenance only but even standing room would soon be lacking for populations increasing in geometrical ratio. What the economist Malthus had needlessly feared Nature thus provided against when giving birth to reproductive life. It was also provided that death's beneficent counterpoise to birth should not become exorbitant. Life secured her children's due continuance on earth by arming each with the instinct that spurs it to work out its salvation from preventable death by the means within its range of power, its native endowment of subtle craft, of fleet foot or wing, of formidable horns or teeth and claws. Man, inferior to lower creatures in physical adaptation to a perilous environment, Life gifted with the unique endowment of a superior brain as the instrument of an all-conquering mind, comparable to that wonder-working rod with which Moses is said to have humbled the pride and power of the Egyptian throne.

Equipped only thus man began to gather food, to subdue the beasts, to clothe himself against the frost. He saw sparks struck out by colliding

stones, the effect of lightning on combustible stuff, and by patient observation and thought achieved the great step forward of kindling fire. Thus by reflection on his experience his ignorance was tutored into rudimentary knowledge of Nature's resources and ways, and the invention of simple arts. The ages of stone, of copper, of iron, added each its quota to his acquisitions till reflection achieved his next great forward step in the written record by which the experience of all past generations is treasured as productive capital for accelerated progress by their successors. Capacitated by creative Life thus to fulfil the mission to "subdue the earth," ascribed to him in the first chapter of Genesis, he has now learned how to disarm the pestilence of its terrors, to override the wildest rage of ocean, and to add to his span of years not "a cubit," but a decade and more. Thus far has man survived and prospered through increasing mastery of the stern conditions of his world only by constant struggle to obey the law to which he found himself like all lower creatures subjected — the law which St. Paul has embodied in a classic sentence, "Work out your own salvation."

A law of Nature is not a law of Nature only. It expresses an idea, a thought; it implies a thinker, a mind, as its author. It is a law of the Mind we discover pervading Nature, the Author of Nature,

the Organiser of the system of inseparably linked causes and effects which constitutes the order of Nature. Such a system expresses his determination that such and such antecedents shall be followed by such and such consequents. In this constant and inflexible "nature of things" men have been forced by experience to recognise the pressure of a superhuman law and will. St. Augustine so recorded the discovery: "The nature of things is the will of God." Centuries before him St. Paul had recorded the hopeful aspect of the fact: "We know that to them who love God all things work together for good."

But the more ancient sophism of Protagoras, *Homo mensura*, continues to infect current conceptions of the law of God with the fallacy that it is like the laws of men. These are statutory, may be repealed or amended, may be suspended, may release the transgressor for whom a substitute makes satisfaction. Not so the law which God inlaid in the constitution of his world with the impress of his immutable purpose, to be fulfilled in the nature of things so closely linked as causes and effects in Nature's order. According to our working in this order or counter to it a good or evil effect issues from its natural cause automatically, inevitably, immediately. In such constant experiences science sees and endeavours to conform to Nature's uniform method, and like the ancient Stoics, bids us,



at least in its special domain, to "live according to Nature." Religion sees further, sees the method of God immanent in Nature, and bids us live as children of "the Father, who," as St. Peter taught, "without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work." Both to science and religion it is the method of an immutable law imperatively sanctioned by sureties of reward and penalty.

Civilised men are still but slowly learning the time-long lesson of experience that Nature's methods are laws that cannot be transgressed with impunity, even when unconsciously disregarded. Everything on the earth's surface has a way of gravitating downward toward the earth's centre. Downward are pulled the wayfarer and the building that lack firm base for foot or underpinning. Quicksand instantly engulfs the incautious foot, whether bent on charity or on robbery. Venice's lofty Campanile stood for centuries on wooden foundations whose slow decay wrought sudden ruin. Never a moment does this law of gravitation suspend its working; not even for the safety of innocent and helpless thousands. The weakly built dam that has for a while held back an artificial lake from rushing down a valley gives way on a sudden, and populous Johnstown is overwhelmed. Then some said, "There is no God." Others charged God foolishly with pitiless neglect to interfere. Others saw only an inscrutable mystery.

before which they must piously bow in submission to the will of God.

What share, now, has the will of God in catastrophes that send a shudder through nations — such as the wreck of the *Titanic*?

Let us first suppose that Nature's way of working were not always the same — that a ship with its bottom stove would not always gravitate to the depths, especially if a thousand people were aboard for whom no boats had been provided. Or that chemicals would not always produce the same reactions, especially if a careless apothecary had sent strychnine instead of quinine. Or that the bubonic plague would not always communicate its poison, especially if a slackly guarded quarantine had let it slip into a populous city. Countless are the cases of identical kind. No evil thing is ever done whose consequent evil is non-diffusive, falling on the doer only. Could it then be sanely proposed that, whenever any one defaults the personal responsibility imposed on him by the nature of things, the law he has broken shall be broken again by an act of God miraculously intervening to bar out the diffusive evil consequent? Even now we see multitudes taking chances against the constant uniformity and certainty with which the natural order maintains the sovereignty of fixed and predicable law, the only alternative to which is the rule of incalculable chance, with its demoralising pre-

mium on an uncurbed recklessness of consequences. We have reason to be thankful that the burden of social as well as of individual responsibility for observance of the laws stamped by God on the constitution of his world is never lifted or lightened thus—that his inducements to circumspect obedience to them are never weakened by any indulgence either to individual lawlessness or to social toleration of it.

It is now clear what part the law and will of God have in the vast sum of preventable sufferings as well as in great catastrophes. The tragic experience of an individual or of a thousand together that makes a glaring headline in the daily news is not by itself, apart from all or any of its antecedents, the will of our “faithful Creator”—faithful to himself and to us. People who imagine it so to be may remind us of the ancient Athenian, who carried to the market-place a single brick to show as a specimen of the house he offered for sale. The tragic event is not the whole thing. It is often but a small part of the whole, the sudden end of an imprudent course that has been imperceptibly gliding toward the cataract—as when fatalities miscalled “accidents” begin to happen on a railway whose road-bed has not been kept in good repair, or as when the sowing of wild oats in early manhood comes to its natural harvest in weakly or degenerate children, if any, and in premature

senescence. We must try to see things whole, as God sees them, and in the connected whole to see his will. Our reading of it in any event of blessing or of bane is "not good if detached" from the interpretation found only in the cause or causes of which it is the natural sequel. His infinite purpose, indeed, transcends the measure of man's mind. We must say with the Hebrew poet, "Lo, these are but part of his ways, and how little a portion is heard of them!" Thus much, however, is a matter of positive experience.

The iron wheels of Nature run irreversibly on an unbroken track. They spare none who, whether with good intent or evil, whether purposely or ignorantly, stand in their way. The student of Nature who beholds here as elsewhere "a secret meaning in her deeds" sees in it the meaning of the Mind he discovers organising and pervading Nature — the purpose and will of God to maintain inviolate his order of Nature, his beneficent will to secure man's ultimate success in the struggle to work out his salvation under his faithful Creator's reign of law as the only sane and practicable way. Every natural agent is God's agent. Its special activity is a mode of God's activity in Nature. Since he created it to act as it does, he must will that it should so act. Its action and reaction in resulting good or evil are manifestly the sanctions

of reward or penalty attached by the will of the Lawgiver to his law.

A further question still awaits us. Even now, as for ages past, a vast amount of suffering falls on multitudes who continue densely ignorant of this law. Can this, one asks, be just? Could not some simple knowledge of natural laws, enough to obviate such misery, have been imparted in the beginning, and from time to time in line upon line? Some such knowledge is seen in the instincts of the lower creatures sufficient for their necessities: why have men been unprovided with it? Only since the rise of modern science have men begun to recognise the fact of the universal reign of law in Nature.

A noble army of martyrs who perished in such efforts rises from the grave to reply. Stoning has become a proverbial word for the experience of prophets, proposers of new and better things. Science has won her throne in our time only through many a strenuous and bitter conflict with the powers of darkness. Beside all this we are even now confronted with a strange and glaring fact. Among men who know the laws of Nature sufficiently well we see them widely disobeyed. A medical friend affirms that medical men are as negligent herein as any other social class of intelligent

people, though knowing better than others the laws of health. Communities that have boards of health, and read in their newspapers how other communities have suffered the scourge of typhoid for neglect to safeguard the purity of their water supply, still have to suffer for the same neglect. See then on one side ignorant multitudes in Asia fighting against the effects of sanitary science to eradicate the plague. See on the other side how all warnings and all ghastly examples of the evil wrought by the drink-devil fail to hold back myriads of our countrymen from the pit of an earthly hell.

Not the way of plain information in advance of experience, but the way of discovery spurred on by painful experience has thus been vindicated negatively. It has been vindicated positively by the fact of its increasing success, steady though so strangely slow, as the only practicable way of God with men whose will is not otherwise tractable. The lower creatures are tethered within narrow limits to instinct. Man has been given free range to prove all things by experience, and to choose the good under the rule of reason. Thus has he discovered, only thus could he have been made submissive to the imperative law of Nature, which reason bids him reverence as the law and will of God.

At this point a question that rises often in the present line of thought should have such answer as



the space for it permits: What room under this reign of fixed and immutable law is there for prayer? Large room for all prayer which endeavours to unite man's will with God's will, and to draw upon divine aid to do the will divine. No other aim of prayer is permissible and rational.

"Our wills are ours, we know not how,  
Our wills are ours to make them thine."

In such prayer human aspiration springs from divine inspiration. So the Christian poet sang,

"Prayer is the breath of God in man,  
Returning whence it came."

Borrowing here a thought of Cardinal Newman, we should think of prayer as an evocation of the immanent God, rather than as an invocation of Deity from on high — as a calling up from within, not as a calling down from above. Charles Wesley's lines describe it well:

"Spring thou up within my heart,  
Rise to all eternity."

The subject is much too large for more here than these suggestions of the most fruitful line of rational thought. The great struggle of rational religion is to realise the truth of the divine immanence by practical appropriation of its inspirational power. It is this which, under the reign of un-



changeable law, there is large need and room for men to achieve through prayer.

What now needs emphasis is that man's discovery of the law of Nature as the law and will of God is more than his discovery, and not to be boasted as merely that. It is none the less God's revelation. What men have discovered in Nature the Author of Nature put there for them to seek and find. He has allured them to seek it by the incentives of wonder and curiosity, and by unceasing suffering through ignorance or neglect has spurred them to unceasing search for it and conformity to it when found. Only after many centuries, and now only in a small moiety of sanely ordered and normal human lives, has this slow process of God's revelation through man's experience reached a latitude where dawn new presentiments of

"the crowning race  
Of those who eye to eye shall look  
On knowledge, under whose command  
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand  
Is Nature like an open book."

Measured by the Revealer's time-scale his process may not in the far future seem so slow as it seems now. The earth, said Professor Shaler, is likely, for all that the geologist can anticipate, to continue habitable for a hundred million years. In comparison with the ages to come, even if but "twenty

million summers are stored in the sunlight still," what are the centuries since man came into being but a few minutes in a year?

To gather into a sentence our study of human experience under the law and will of God in Nature: The constitution of the world, God's ground-law for its inhabitants, exempts no man from the imperative necessity of working out his own salvation by diligence in finding and closely following the way of life that God reveals through experience of the nature of things in their indissoluble linkage of cause and effect. This long experience was at length summed up in Jesus' saying, "Strive, for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." But not his salvation only, his neighbour's also a man is taught by experience to strive for in this way as solicitously as for his own, lest by his neighbour's default he be drawn down with him into the vortex of disaster. Bound thus he finds himself to count his neighbour's safety and welfare as dear to him as his own. In ancient Scripture these great lessons of still more ancient experience concerning man's twofold relation to his Creator and his fellows are compendiously recorded in two "great commandments" as the substance of the law of God and the teachings of its prophets: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy

heart," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

It was remarked by Lord Bacon<sup>1</sup> that "a little natural philosophy, and the first entrance into it, doth dispose the opinion to atheism; but, on the other side, much natural philosophy, and wading deep into it, will bring about men's minds to religion." This tendency of seeking below the often stern and hard face of the nature of things for the underlying reality and its practical working in the long run begins to appear, and will become more apparent as we proceed. Mr. G. K. Chesterton<sup>2</sup> has touched a profound truth in saying, "Ultimately a man can rejoice in nothing but the nature of things"—a saying which may remind one of St. Augustine's profound remark already quoted.

## II.

Turning now from the revelation of God's law and will that experience finds in physical nature to the revelation that is found supplementing and re-enforcing it in the higher realm of moral nature, we have first to observe the fact which outwardly parts the moral from the physical. Physical nature is of immensely ancient, moral nature of comparatively recent birth. Foregleams of its advent had indeed appeared in creatures of older origin than man. In man first was it born into capacity

<sup>1</sup> *Meditationes Sacræ*, X.

<sup>2</sup> *Heretics*, p. 110.

for that unceasing development toward an ideal "image of God," which Genesis may seem to foresee, and which is still slowly advancing towards its apparently distant goal. It is now a truism of science that the biological record of animal life since its first dawning is repeated in the formation of every human child during the nine months preceding its birth. No such truism yet, but equally true it is, that the moral history of man thus far is essentially repeated in the moral development of the individual—a history till now of a more or less arrested development in most men, and of high attainment by comparatively few.

All men enter the living world as animals of the highest zoological order, physically formed, morally as unformed as their friend the dog, yet distinguished from him by an unconscious moral nature uniquely capacitated for an early awakening and a boundless development. This begins when the child that has learned to "mind mamma" is initiated by her into the fundamental principle of morality in its rudimentary expression as the art of living together. Its range widens as brothers and sisters join the family; widens again as families grow into tribes; again as tribes unite to form a nation; again as nations get together in an *entente cordiale* for mutual benefit. The universality of the principle, thus progressively applied, seems envisaged in the New Testament's classic version of

it, "Consider one another." Moral nature is essentially social. Only in society can it develop. Physical life is impossible where there is no air. Moral life is impossible in a hermitage, withdrawn from maintenance of its vital breath in justice, truth and love toward fellow men. A law of gravitation inheres in moral nature as in physical. Social instinct draws men together as inevitably as the fragments of cosmic matter are drawn together into stars and planets. Feeble individuals are thus constrained to coalesce for mutual reinforcement by the collective strength of the social whole. Its cohesive force depends on the sum of individual fidelity to the primary lesson of the family, *Consider one another*. Each has still to work out his own and his neighbour's salvation under the primal law of physical nature. All discover through many a sore experience that this is possible only in obedience to the supplementary law of moral nature demanding brotherly consideration, truth and justice between man and man.

It is a fallacious distinction which some draw between knowledge of physical law, as attained by human reason, and knowledge of moral law, as bestowed by divine revelation. The record of that revelation preserved in the Scriptures itself corrects the error. It testifies<sup>1</sup> that men to whom

<sup>1</sup> *Romans* ii, 14, 15.

God's prophets have not proclaimed the moral law given to Israel have it "written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith." Their experience had made them see it there; so that "they do by nature the things of the law," and "are a law unto themselves." A thousand years before the Ten Commandments were given to the Israelites, moral law had been published as statutory law in the Babylonian code of King Hammurapi, and an inscription on a tomb testified to Egyptian readers of moral responsibility beyond the tomb.<sup>1</sup> God's method of revealing truth, whether physical or moral, is uniformly the same—the *a posteriori* teaching of experience, not the *a priori* teaching of information. The Author of Nature has linked causes and effects together no less in its higher than in its lower realm. Inseparable in the order of Nature, whether moral or physical, they must be the same in the order of knowledge, adequately known and learned only as operative in their experienced action and reaction. How utterly ineffectual any *a priori* information of this would be is certified by historical facts. Thousands of years of tragic experiences in individual lives, mighty empires, splendid cities, brilliant civilisations, all ruined by successive failure to fulfil the primary moral law, *Consider one another,*

<sup>1</sup> See Breasted's *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 169, 170.



and its demand for justice, truth and brotherly regard between men, have proved so ineffectual a warning that even now grim consequences of the same failure begin to threaten the stability both of modern empires and of modern democracies. Holy Scripture records what history had taught: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked";<sup>1</sup> "Peace on earth among men of good will."<sup>2</sup>

In this so universal law of *the good will*, whose inarticulate demand was felt in the aboriginal family group, reason hears the voice of him who in the beginning made men to dwell in families. Where he first revealed it in human experience, there man first discovered it. A true instinct it was which prompted primitive men to place this law, so imperative for working out their common salvation, under the watch and ward of the patron deity of the nomad tribe, every man of which, as among the wandering Israelites, was regarded as brother to every other. Nor can more enlightened men now be content with any lower sanction for it than that of him whom Israel named Yahveh, ignorantly worshiped with bloody rites, and invoked in ferocious wars as God of battle; but now, with vision clarified from dark superstitions, and known in Christendom as Jehovah, is worshiped by spiritual believers with prayer and philanthropy as Father of his world-wide human family.

<sup>1</sup> *Isaiah* lvii, 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Luke* ii, 14.



The fundamental truth which history constrains reason to recognise in its record of the good and evil experiences of more than sixty centuries is that of a Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness. In the long run truth and justice always prevail, falsehood and injustice always fail. Selfish despots boasting that God is on the side of the strongest battalions are overborne by his battalions that they wot not of; tyrannous Might is ever dethroned by invincible Right.

In this stream of time-long experiences the materialist is constrained to admit a historical fact. His descriptive term for it, "a stream of tendency," admits no rational account of the Power immanent in the stream, the controlling and directing governance of the stream to its determined issue, the divine Providence, which, as the Hebrew psalmist sang, extorts homage in the end even from the wrathful passions that it curbs. As Browning sang,

"Brute strength

Clangs his huge mace down in the other scale;  
The inspired soul but flings his patience in,  
And slowly that outweighs the ponderous globe."

Thus from age to age the world makes moral progress through the resistless working of the law incorporated in moral nature by its divine Author — the law of good will.

The popular fallacy of imagining the divine law to be like human law, statutory, enacted and modifiable at will, has already been exposed. The fallacy that lurks in the popular phrase which represents God's law as "made" by him needs now a word. What any man does is largely determined by what he is. True even of weak and variable men, this must be without exception true of "the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation." What God is must determine his activity throughout, as the law of his Being, of his immutable Self; it is necessarily the law of both the physical and the moral nature whose ground of being is in him. Such a law is in no sense "made"; it eternally *exists* in God. He *is* the law. This is precisely what the Scriptures repeatedly affirm as his commandment: "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy." And so our discovery that the organising principle of human society from its beginning in the first family, the vital principle of development in moral nature to its present stage, is the law of good will, holds us rationally to regard it as revealing what our Creator is, and as binding on us as on him. Thus we find our moral nature itself to have been the primeval and perpetual prophet of the truth embalmed in the saying of the Scripture, "God is love," and adding confirmation to the lessons of time-long experience summed up in the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The law which God has impressed on the nature of the world and of man as the law of his own Being is his revelation of man's obligation to work out his own salvation by obeying it. Its necessary and only interpreter is man's experience of its immutable working with the obedient and against the disobedient in its fixed and uniform sequences of cause and effect. These readings of experience, from its first lesson in the hard school of the physical world to the last lessons of moral education in society, have been summed up in a few terse sayings, treasured as Holy Scripture to be an imperishable record for all future generations. A record of man's time-long experience, it is no less a record of God's revelation thereby of law which he unchangeably wills to maintain. We cannot too highly prize these golden sayings, in which the eternal thought and purpose of the divine Lawgiver is attested as the experience of mankind. They must be stamped upon our hearts and habits, would we not forget them to our hurt and loss, for they are the witness of time to truths of eternity.

But ill were it for man had he by himself to work out his salvation by them. Even in prehistoric times men learned that Nature worked with those who worked with what they had discovered to be her method and law. Not Nature only, rather the Lawgiver immanent and ever active in Nature and in man unfaillingly works with all who

work in the way of his own unceasing activity. This also has been attested by the long experience whose primeval maxim, "Work out your own salvation," is preserved in Scripture together with this encouragement to good endeavour: "for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure."

Men have now learned to work scrupulously in God's ways, though in unconsciousness that they are working with him, in the lines of mechanical and chemical science endeavouring to subdue the powers and resources of physical nature to control and use. The larger and much less undertaken task is to work with God as solicitously in the line of moral endeavour to subdue the selfish passions that war against his law of good will, and now menace the pride of an externally brilliant civilisation with the recurrence of woes oft experienced in vain, if it be yet in vain.

JAMES MORRIS WHITON.

VI

THE UNFOLDINGS OF THE INDWELLING  
GOD



## VI

### THE UNFOLDINGS OF THE INDWELLING GOD

LET us concede at the outset that God can be known only in experience. Some will say, only by revelation; even so, the revelation must first be experienced. Though the intellect has its part to perform, the knowledge of God never comes through the intellect alone or chiefly. It appears in consciousness in a way impossible fully to explain. St. Paul seems to intimate this to the Athenian philosophers in saying that God has made men "to feel after him and find him," *i. e.*, by such feeling. The Greek word for it means blind feeling. Some one has called religion man's ultimate reaction in the presence of the sum total of things. It is quite possible for a man to have a real and vivid consciousness of God, and yet to be without any very definite or satisfactory concept of him.

But man as a rational being seeks the satisfaction of his mind as well as his soul in some intelligible conception of God. The fact that he has always formed these concepts indicates a law of the human mind. With advancing knowledge and enlarging



experience, from age to age, these have undergone change. From many gods to one, from a tribal or national god to one that is universal, from a god of mere power to one of justice and love, from a god afar off to one who tabernacles in human flesh, from God incarnate in a single life to God incarnate in all lives — do not these steps indicate the general line of advance? A study of these conceptions reveals a continuous unfolding and expansion of the idea of God.

Perhaps the most recent of these changes in occidental religious thought has been from the conception of God as transcendent to that of God as immanent. Why this change? It is claimed that this view harmonises better with man's growing knowledge.

For centuries God was conceived of mainly as transcendent. He was thought of as existing above and apart from the universe, and as acting upon it from without. So long as that conception of God's mode of existence seemed to offer a satisfactory explanation of known facts, it remained dominant. All knowledge and experience was interpreted in the light of this idea. This view, emphasising separateness between God and the universe, rendered a real and continuing service. But it is hardly a half-truth; rather it is a single aspect of a larger truth. The over-emphasising of this partial truth reached its logical outcome in deism, with its doctrine of an

absentee God and a self-running universe. The harmful consequences of that one-sided view have long been apparent. In putting the stress upon the difference between God and the universe, deism destroyed the unity; it banished God to an unknown region beyond the ken of man; it led to a false view of the natural and the supernatural, and brought all that is natural into mean estimation. Overlooking the continuous miracle of all orderly processes in nature and in human life, it caused men to seek for God in signs and wonders and portents "spooking about in the natural order."

A better knowledge of nature and of man has necessitated a change in our mode of conceiving God. In the light of to-day we find it impossible to think of God in some extrasidereal region beyond the boundaries of the finite world and outside the life of man. Insistence upon such a view must lead to agnosticism. Moreover, metaphors borrowed from outgrown forms of social and political organisation, while having in them an enduring element of truth, have become a hindrance rather than a help in our effort to conceive of God. We feel that, if God is anywhere, he is everywhere, and within as well as without. We seek for witnesses of him in the fruitful earth, in the broad sky, in the widening marvels of human history, and in the heart of man. Accordingly, many men of the modern spirit and point-of-view are coming to think of

God as immanent in nature and in life. Professor Bowne defines immanence thus: "By divine immanence we mean that God is the omnipresent ground of all finite existence and activity, and nature is simply the form under which the Supreme Reason and Will manifest themselves." Another says, "God is a personal energy, indwelling in nature and man, yet transcending both, who, by the method of law, is seeking increasingly beneficent ends." The idea of immanence conveys more than omnipresence, and gives the dynamic significance it had for St. Paul.<sup>1</sup> It enlarges and makes more definite the conception of omnipresence. For, as Professor W. N. Clarke says, "Immanence undertakes to expound the relation between the omnipresent God and the universe with which he is present. It not only affirms that God is present, but attempts to suggest something of what he effects by virtue of his presence, and how the universe is affected by it." Immanence also enriches our thought of the Holy Spirit. For signs of the Holy Spirit's indwelling were sought only in experiences which were purely moral and religious, whereas the concept of immanence claims the whole of life for its field. In essays which precede this, this view has been amply set forth. The value of it is great. It resolves many difficulties in religious thought; it brings God intimately near; it is implicit in the doc-

<sup>1</sup> *Philippians* ii, 13.

trine of evolution; it promotes a religious interpretation of all life; it supplies an adequate religious foundation for both science and democracy; it makes possible a convincing restatement of the real nature and mutual relation of the natural and the supernatural; and it confers a higher dignity upon all life. It is not, of course, an entirely new view. It is taught unmistakably by Jesus and St. Paul. So far as it is new at all, it is in realisation and in emphasis.

But the truth of immanence, while possessing these values of a high order, is not without its attending dangers. In reacting strongly against the idea of mere transcendence, religious thought is tending toward the other extreme of a God merely immanent. This is seen in some popular religious cults of the day. As formerly in deism the unity between God and the universe was lost in affirming the difference, so the danger now is of sacrificing difference in maintaining the unity. When God and the universe, God and man, are so identified as to become in all respects one substance, it is difficult to distinguish this view from pantheism, and it is even more difficult to preserve finite individuality, moral distinctions, and genuine human freedom. But a sound religious consciousness revolts against both these extreme positions. "Actual living religion," says one, "the religion which is both trust and devotion, which preserves the reality of evil

and genuine freedom of choice, requires a God who is one with man, the life within his life, the inner essence, the very substance of his spiritual being; yet one who, transcending finite reality, is separate from the universe and from man, and who in the fulness of his perfections can only be known through a glass darkly." In thinking of God as transcendent while immanent we preserve the truth and escape the untruth in both extreme views. Though we cannot understand how God can be in the universe, its uncaused cause and ever-present ground, how he can be in man, the infinite source of his life, "energising in him to will and to work for his good pleasure," and yet be a distinct personality, objective as well as subjective, transcendent as well as immanent, the One to whom he can go, the One to whom he can pray, and with whom he can commune "as a man speaketh unto his friend," yet neither of these antithetic truths can be surrendered. If they seem mutually incompatible, it should be remembered that in this region mystery and paradox are to be expected. Religion and philosophy require both; and both must be retained, each correcting and balancing the other, until the immanent Spirit himself, through the enlarging experience and maturing life of man, shall reveal the harmonising truth.

"Our wills are ours, we know not how,  
Our wills are ours, to make them thine."

Let us, however, bear in mind two facts: One, that, while we maintain the essential truth for which the truth of God's transcendence stands, the truth of God's immanence must receive heavier emphasis than most give it. For God, habitually conceived of as merely transcendent, is thought to be unknown, unless he breaks in upon the natural order and reveals himself by miracle. But, if conceived to be immanent in nature and in man, manifesting himself in all orderly processes of the world and of human life, God may so far be known. All study and thought, all enlarging and maturing experience, all earnest endeavour and noble achievement, help to reveal him in whom they have their ground and source of being.

The other fact to bear in mind is this: That, if immanence be regarded as a true conception of God, this truth, like that of evolution, is an instrument of inquiry. It is, at least, the best available hypothesis to explain known facts.

We now turn our attention to three classes of facts, and consider whether the hypothesis of God's immanence offers a helpful explanation.

#### I. THE GROWING LIGHT.

In every department of human life, the scientific spirit and method are bringing to light new facts, and also throughout the realm of nature. With closer observation and more attentive study



of nature, new facts, forces, laws, and marvels have been discovered. We have, as a result, a group of natural sciences. With more careful and exact study of man, of his body and his mind, facts, laws, and powers, hitherto not known or but dimly perceived, have been disclosed. In himself, and in his physical, moral, and social relationships, man is better understood. And this knowledge, properly classified, makes the new sciences of man which are the boast of our civilisation. With a more thorough study of society, of man in his complex social relationships, as he appears both in the successive stages of his developing history and in contemporary life, our histories, psychologies, and sociologies are being re-written. So great is the sum total of new light in every field of scientific inquiry, and so widespread is its influence that the familiar words of the poet seem abundantly justified :

“Out of the shadow of the night  
The world rolls into light;  
It is day-break everywhere.”

What shall we call this new knowledge — revelation, or discovery? Since revelation and discovery are properly correlative and not antithetic terms, why not call it both? For we are considering the same fact from different points of view. From the standpoint of God, new knowledge would be called revelation; from the standpoint of man, discovery.



What, however, has this growing light revealed? I have spoken of new facts, forces, laws. But something deeper than this must have emerged from the prolonged quest. The spiritual reality within and behind the universe comes forth into clearer view. But, though the advance of knowledge has pushed the veil a little aside, it has not removed it. What has been learned has amply rewarded the labour, and it has served also to intensify the ardour of further quest. The background of mystery, however, is still there. But out of this region of mystery issues the life-force which Spencer called the "infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed." The intrinsic nature of this power scientists do not claim to know, but they know something of the laws by which it operates, and the ends toward which it continually moves. One of these laws is the law of development: "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." And the end seems to be the impartation of perfect life.

Let us apply our hypothesis to these facts. As we trace the evolutionary advance, in nature from the earliest appearance of cosmic vapour to the orderly cosmos as we know it, in man from the primitive savage to the higher types of moral and spiritual manhood, in society from the earliest social institutions held together by tyrannous power to the present recognition of obligations and rights; and

then, if we see further that in this advancing movement there is the potentiality and promise of a greater advance yet to be made, shall we find any better explanation than this? That central in life, the life within all life, is God, who as personal, rational, purposive, is revealing himself in human experience as a righteous and loving power working toward perfect life; and that revelation, in the broadest sense as well as in the more restricted sense in which the word is commonly used, is one of the continuous processes or activities of immanent Deity.

## II. INCREASING GOODNESS.

We turn now to another class of facts, which seem to indicate that man in a generic sense is not only becoming more enlightened, but is becoming more humane, healthier, happier, and better. But this statement can hardly escape challenge. For, while these facts are evident, there is also another and quite different set which point to another conclusion. Selfishness, disease, poverty, exploitation of the weak, crime, war are still rampant in society. In pantheism, which denies the reality of evil and of genuine moral freedom, no satisfying explanation of these facts can be found, but only in that distinction between God and the universe for which the truth of his transcendence stands.

But it is quite possible to exaggerate this dark side of the picture. Many experiences combine to force them upon our attention, while other and more hopeful facts easily escape observation. But when one's horizon is enlarged to include the broad field of human history and of contemporary life, the conviction deepens that the world is steadily growing better. The study of physical nature, indeed, produces no such conviction. Natural forces seem indifferent to moral good or evil. But the earth, in yielding her increase, and the great natural forces in becoming the obedient servants of man, are surely supplying the material basis on which a higher civilisation may be built. When, however, we turn to consider man in history, and see the stages of developing life through which he has already passed in his ascent; when we take note of the changes which have taken place in his ideas, his social customs, his ethical conceptions and his religion; when we recall how the strong man at one time ate his weaker brother; how later he overpowered him and made him his slave; how later he attached him to his land as a serf, and gave him protection in return for labour and military service; and, later still, how the serf became the wage-earner in our complex industrial system — when, I say, we observe all this, though we may know that he is far from having reached the goal, we cannot help seeing that he has made enormous advance.

And when we consider man in contemporary life, while we are impressed with his wonderful conquest over nature's forces which have made possible an ever-increasing productiveness and comfort, we are even more impressed with certain moral and social facts.

There is evidently abroad in society to-day a spirit which is energising mightily for man's redemption and salvation. Nor need we understand these words in an exclusively moral and religious sense. Redemption may be used as a proper term to describe deliverance from all evils and negations, and salvation may rightly denote the process of advance to the final attainment of all that is positively good. Certainly there is a steadily growing social consciousness, a rising tide of good will, which assumes the most practical forms of helpfulness. This spirit is seeking, not merely to lessen, but to abolish many ancient evils and wrongs; it aims, not merely at effects, but at underlying causes; it proposes not simply to save an individual here and there from sickness, poverty, ignorance, and sin, but to save society by reducing these evils to a vanishing point. Idealism is seen to-day in its most daring form, and it is eminently practical. The social spirit knows what it desires, and how it believes the desired thing can be obtained. Great social agencies and organisations devoted to these ends have been called into existence; their aims are

daily becoming more clearly defined, and their methods more efficient. We have only to think of the vast educational, scientific, social, and missionary movements of our time; the great institutions and organisations which exist for the disinterested service of human needs; the advance in a medical science which is becoming more and more preventive in its aims; the improvements in wealth-production and in efforts for more equitable methods of its distribution; the moral change which is coming into the spirit of our politics; the endeavour which the Church is making to translate modern knowledge into religious power, and to adjust itself to new social conditions; — we have, I say, only to look over the field and see the salient facts which loom large in the view, to realise that this spirit is modifying, transforming, revolutionising the thoughts and institutions of men to make them increasingly more efficient servants of its moral and social purpose. And this purpose seems everywhere to be making man more kindly, purposeful, co-operative, more efficient, and more righteous.

How shall we account for all this? What hypothesis offers the best explanation? May we not truly say that an infinite Spirit, resident in man and in the race, which during all the past has manifested himself in elect personalities and supremely in one, is ever communicating himself to all through the mediation of many, and is now, in increasing

effectiveness, a Power not ourselves, making for righteousness and for the promotion of human weal? Can we not reasonably conclude that this progressive work of saving man from evil and sin looks like a continuous activity of indwelling Deity? It is a fact, as significant as it is remarkable, that thinkers whose studies lie in the field of natural phenomena, everywhere evincing the reign of law, are more prone than others to doubt the reality of divine direction and control; while those who devote themselves to the study of mankind in history, where lawlessness and brutality abound, are more commonly disposed to recognise an overruling Providence that in the long run makes right triumph over might, and out of evil brings good. Such a conclusion certainly tends to justify itself, on pragmatist grounds, by its working power as a motor-nerve of hope and effort toward a divine consummation.

### III. PROGRESSIVE JUDGMENT AND ATONEMENT.

I have spoken of revelation, redemption, salvation, of growing light and increasing goodness. Attention should also be called to the methods by which this advance is being won. So far as the method has to do with the work of the individual for his own salvation, we may call it progressive judgment; so far as it is concerned with the work which the individual does for the salvation of others



and of society, we may call it progressive atonement. Let us look for a moment at each of these processes.

Man is so constituted as to feel obligation to choose the higher good in preference to the lower, the right way to the wrong. "Man needs must love the highest when he sees it." Yes, when he really sees it. But in his evolution as a race, and in his development as an individual, he came first in experience to know the lower forms of good, such as the gratification of the senses. The higher forms of good were not yet seen, or were but dimly perceived. With advancing light and increasing goodness, appearing first in great personalities and evidencing their worth, men singly and in groups came to see and to have faith in higher forms of good and in better methods of action. No sooner did these higher types of good and these better methods of attaining the good emerge into clear view than men, consciously or unconsciously, began to institute comparison with past and present forms of good. The necessary result of such comparison was moral judgment. And this judgment is a continuing process. It is said that every day is a day of judgment, and again that judgment takes place in the crises of individual and national experience. Both statements are true. With advancing conceptions of what constitutes the good, the process of judging is continually going on in the life of the



individual and of society; but many tendencies and principles, absolutely wrong, or relatively less good than the best, do not reveal their real inner nature until they have completed their growth, and matured their characteristic fruit. So the day of judgment may seem to tarry, but it will come. In individual lives, spirit, methods, principles, conceptions of good, are in time tried and approved, or tried and condemned. In history and in contemporary life judgment-days come for society, when a principle, a policy, or a form of social organisation, dominant for centuries, is seen in the light of some higher good, and is condemned. In that judgment the moral imperative is heard, and, though the thing condemned may linger for a time under suspended sentence, it is henceforth destined either to be abandoned or to be transformed. *Sic transit gloria mundi*; but only that it may give place to a higher form of glory. The passing of slave and feudal systems; successive forms of government—despotism, monarchy, constitutional monarchy, oligarchy, democracy; the relation of great nations to lesser nations—annexation, annexation with incorporation but without representation, annexation with incorporation and with representation, annexation with self-government and friendly counsel and aid—do not these steps represent a real advance toward higher forms of social and political good? As “men rise on stepping stones of their dead selves

to higher things," so do nations and the race itself through progressive judgment of values, and the moral imperative to choose the higher. Why is it that when a man's heart is touched by the power of the higher types of beauty, of goodness, of truth, and of righteousness, he feels an obligation to choose them? May we not say that it is because God is within, "working in him to will and to work for his good pleasure," and that the judgment, the moral imperative, and the power are all from him?

I have been speaking of the judgment which the individual and society pass upon themselves, and is auxiliary to personal and social salvation. But we must not forget that redemption and salvation are mightily advanced by the altruistic self-giving of those in whom judgment has done its best work. "God so loved the world," St. John tells us, as to desire that none should perish, but that all should have eternal life, and, that his desire might be realised, he gave his son. The son, in furtherance of the divine purpose, gave his life in service and in suffering. But may we not also say that the immanent God has been and is working continually in and through many lives for the world's salvation? The fact of human solidarity and brotherhood has been steadily gaining clearer and clearer recognition. Individuals, classes, races, nations are seen to be mutually dependent and interdependent. In all life, there is a vicarious principle and law. All are re-

ipients of blessings which they have not earned, and all are partakers of disabilities and sufferings which they have not personally deserved. In conformity with a universal law, individuals, generations, nations are either drawing interest on the upright character and noble achievements of those who have preceded them, or they are engaged in atoning for their ancestors' sins and in paying their debts. In most instances they are doing both; and, at the same time, by their own conduct, they are making it easier or harder for those who will come after them.

But, besides the vicariousness necessitated by the solidarity of life and which none escape, there is a vicariousness purely voluntary. All men who are good are helping to save, but those who voluntarily assume the disabilities of others in order to impart of their own life are saviours in a much higher sense. For the sake of delivering others from sickness, ignorance, and sin, men and women of pure lives and humane spirit are so identifying themselves sympathetically with those who sin and suffer and lack, that in giving of their life they share the penalty which belongs to others. Mothers, who, righteous themselves, have been the suffering saviours of wayward sons; teachers, who in labour and sacrifice have given of their knowledge to enlighten the ignorant; physicians, who have not counted their own lives dear to themselves, but have contracted

mortal diseases in their efforts to save the afflicted; patriots and reformers, who have exposed their own souls to the curse of social wrongs in order to save their country; all these and many more — labourers, social workers, ministers, missionaries — are present-day illustrations of this vicarious principle in human lives. In the great and needed work of reconciliation — of man to man, of man to God, of man to himself, of class to class, and race to race — no method is so effective as this. As exhibited in a single transcendent personality, it has been well-named the atonement; and the atonement is a continuing process which the immanent God is working out in and through all lives who feel his presence and are consecrated to his purpose.

That this spirit of atoning righteousness and love is manifested in a steadily increasing number of lives is surely apparent to every careful observer of modern life. What shall be our explanation? How may we account for so impressive a fact? Is there any explanation so satisfactory as this? That God, indwelling human life as universal wisdom and beneficent power, is revealing himself in human experience also as vicarious love, and that his eternal method is more and more becoming consciously man's method of saving the race. And thus men who see God's light, who choose his ends, and who adopt his method, become the instruments and channels of his saving grace.

I have simply called attention to certain broad facts of history and present life which seem to indicate that the race, in virtue of the transcendent factor elemental in it, has been growing in knowledge, in conscious and beneficent purpose, and in the use of kindlier and more efficient methods. Using the very words commonly employed in a narrower and more restricted sense, I have ventured to term the various aspects of this one great factor in human life revelation, redemption, salvation, judgment, atonement. For we have seen in the march of the race these progressive unfoldings of immanent Deity in human experience. But, though I have not spoken by name of the one in whom many of us believe the indwelling God was perfectly revealed, I have not meant to pass by that historic and continuing revelation. In his experience we find the epitome of the spiritual experience of conquering individuals and a conquering race. For the Christ, divested of all divergent theological interpretations, is the image of God<sup>1</sup> in human life. That manifestation of God in the life of our elder brother is at once the symbol and prophecy of the progressive emergence of the potential God in all lives, until his Kingdom shall have fully come, and his will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

We must regard God, then, as both transcendent and immanent, emphasising his immanence, not

<sup>1</sup> *Colossians* i, 15; *Hebrews* i, 3.

merely because this seems to offer the best explanation of the facts, but also because it is not yet well naturalised in common thought. But we need to avoid the mistake of identifying the moral and spiritual elements distinctive of Christianity with any special philosophical or theological dogma. We are suffering now from that mistake in the past. The essentials of Christianity in human relations are righteous character, the loving and trustful spirit, obedience to God, service to man in the promotion of moral and social ends, and vicarious self-giving. While philosophies and sciences change, these do not change. "We know in part, and we prophesy in part." "Knowledge puffeth up, love buildeth up." The great aim of Christianity is to bring the individual and society to complete self-realisation. So far as that is any man's aim, which he seeks in the spirit and by the method of Christ, he may lay just claim to the name Christian, whatever be his peculiar world-view. With full recognition of this fact, a man is nevertheless privileged to accept that philosophy which best harmonises with all his knowledge and with his spirit and purpose. But it is his spirit and purpose, not his philosophy, which entitle him to the name Christian. "I regard 'Christian,' " said the late Edward Caird, Master of Balliol, "as the permanent adjective by which we must define the growing ideal of humanity."

WILLIAM H. BOOCK.





VII  
INCARNATION



## VII

### INCARNATION

WHAT the mysterious forces of Nature are in themselves we do not know. Our limited faculties do not permit us to track them to their ultimate hiding-place. We know them only in terms of action. Their working reveals them. In no other way can they be made known unto us. This is especially true of the mysterious force of electricity. What it is when it lies sleeping in the wire we do not know. When it is aroused and leaps forth as man's servant, lighting his homes and mills, moving his cars, carrying his messages, we can learn something about it. Lord Kelvin, after a life-time of study of its phenomena, confesses that he knows electricity only by the way it acts. So of life itself in the organic world. Where it resides, what is its final abiding-place, whether in matter itself or in the ether which at every point is implicated with matter, we cannot tell. We know it only in its varied forms of manifestation, in flower and tree and bird and beast. Its works are its only revealer. So in the human world, where we are

confronted with the mystery of personality. What Jesus said of his own works every man may say: "The works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me."

If men have left the stamp of their personality on works of art, or on a body of literature, or on an institution of mercy, we discern therein their artistic genius, or their intellectual vision, or their philanthropic character. This outward form is a revelation of the inner life; in this embodiment of the unknown person we see clearly enough the real man behind his works. Inventions and discoveries unveil the mind of the scientist who made them. Strokes and lines of artistic power reveal the skill of the painter or sculptor. Through great compositions in music we catch glimpses of the musician's heart and soul. In the poems that stand the test of time we behold the poet's compelling vision. Classic essays mirror timeless figures. Words that have come sounding down through centuries and ages bear the impress of the forward-looking souls who uttered them. If, as Emerson says, "an institution is the lengthened shadow of a man," what are our churches and schools and hospitals and asylums but the lengthened shadows of the men who founded them?

As the invisible personality of our fellow-man dwells in his works, through which we know the hidden man, it is even so that we may know the

hidden God, through his works in Nature and in man. This conception of the silent revelation of the Unseen One is uttered in the opening lines of the Nineteenth Psalm:

"The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament sheweth his handiwork.  
Day unto day uttereth speech,  
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.  
There is no speech nor language;  
Their voice cannot be heard.  
Their line is gone out through all the earth,  
And their words to the end of the world."

The Epistle to the Romans emphasises the same truth: "For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity."

God dwells in the universe as man dwells in his body, is the conception of modern theism. The only proof I have of the existence of my fellow-man is the revelation of himself through action. I know him to be through the flash of his eye, the touch of his hand, the movements of his bodily frame, the deeds his heart prompts him to, the words which proceed from his mouth. No man in his ultimate essence has ever been seen by a brother-man. What he really is we do not know, what he does declares what manner of man he is. In the same way the only proof I have of the being of God is the revelation of himself through action. We

can know God only through his unveiling of himself in Nature and in man. "No man hath beheld God at any time." Even the pure in heart see him only through his highest and deepest manifestations. The divine Mystery in its holy of holies eludes all seekers, and they who seek God find him only through the clearer illumination of the divine Purpose, which runs like a scarlet thread through all creation.

The author of a recent book on "God and Man," Dr. E. Ellsworth Shumaker, has given us a clear picture of the divine background of all life. "Perchance," he says, "the infinite universe that enfolds us is, in some sense, the infinite God enfolding us. Perchance our thousand-fold connection therewith is in reality a thousand-fold connection with God. Perhaps we, in a way, rest upon God when we stand upon the earth, are encircled by God when enveloped by the air, breathe in God when we breathe the atmosphere; in some sense, feed upon God when we feed upon bread, are vitalised by God when quickened by sunlight, and are held in the power of God when held in the grasp of earth, sun and universe. Such, one may well be persuaded, is the deepest interpretation and truth of things. Living thus within the universe is in reality living, moving, and having one's being in God. And the ten thousand laws of the mighty system that lay hold of us and work day and night

upon and in us are all powers that go forth from him. In the vast universe, therefore, that enspheres us, we see the infinite God ensphering us; and in the myriad laws that work in us we see the myriad influences of God working out his will. All envelopes are divine envelopes in the last meaning of them. First and last, we are held within an infinite enfolding Life; we are ensphered by God." <sup>1</sup>

"Nature," we are told by Dr. James Martineau, "is God's mask." The Eternal Light cannot shine directly upon us, because our senses are not adjusted to such a supernal realm. The outward world acts as a mediator between God and man, bringing the divine into the atmosphere and cognisance of the human and the human into touch and communion with the divine. Nature is the veil with which God covers his face, the garment with which he clothes himself. We cannot throw back the veil or strip off the garment, because it is evidently the divine intention to draw back within the awe-inspiring glories of Nature. We cannot see him face to face. He deliberately conceals his innermost being from us, flashing forth through his works in unmistakable signs his power and beauty. In the deepest sense Nature is an avenue of expression, of revelation, in which God conde-

<sup>1</sup> *God and Man; Philosophy of the Higher Life*, pp. 7, 8. Putnam's, New York.



scends to man and man ascends to God. It is this high function which makes Nature more than matter or force or vital energy; which elevates it to the rank of spirit. It is thus that the poets and mystics who see "the light that never was on sea or land," view Nature. In their far-seeing eyes it becomes a spiritual entity, not in self-consciousness, but far enough on the way to it to be lifted above brute matter. In this respect their insight has been deeper far than that of some theologians and scientists, who are unable to see that, as Dr. Fairbairn says, "Nature is Spirit." Their spiritual vision is often killed by the letter to which they cling, the conception of the outward world as nothing but a storehouse of purely material forces in which the divine is non-resident. For the clear affirmation of the truth that God is in his world, the Life of its life, the Soul of its body, we turn to a modern poet-preacher, John White Chadwick, who sees behind the mask of things:—

"Thy seamless robe conceals thee not  
From earnest hearts and true;  
The glory of thy perfectness  
Shines all its texture through.  
And on its flowing hem we read,  
As thou dost linger near,  
The message of a love more deep  
Than any depth of fear."

The most marvellous thing in man is his power of creation. He can make new heavens and a new

earth. In his hands the future lies. The destinies of the world are not mapped out for us from the beginning, but are committed to us for our shaping and directing. We, with all our weakness and folly and ignorance, hold the keys of life. Nothing, no one, not even the Almighty, can take them from us. Each of us is a creator, the architect and builder of his own house of life, and is immanent in the results that he creates. Whether the fabric of character is fine or coarse, the real man shows through it. In the development of his personality, amidst the perils of its contraction and impoverishment, the indwelling spirit of a man appears. In such creation we may be conscious of our divinity, that our life shares the creative power and purpose of God. In this creation of self by self we see the greatest triumph of life, the best argument for the deathlessness of the soul. As co-workers with the Eternal we may share his joy in creation forever.

As finite creators are immanent in their works, so is the Infinite in his works. While he is not confined to his body, the universe, any more than man's personality is confined to his body, he is manifest to us through it as man is made known through his deeds. While we must not submerge God in his world, must not absolutely identify him with his forms of manifestation; and must always realise that, though his spirit is in all things, it

ever transcends all the forms of its self-expression; still our approach to him must be through the works which declare him. Our feeling as we contemplate the glories of the visible world is that of Coleridge when, standing before sunrise in the presence of Mont Blanc, he beholds the "living flowers that skirt the eternal frost," the "wild goats sporting round the eagle's nest," the "eagles, playmates of the mountain storm," the "lightnings, the dread arrows of the clouds," the "signs and wonders of the elements"—all uttering forth God, and filling the hills with praise. Touching the hem of the garment of the living God as he passes by, the poet cries:—

"O dread and silent Mount! I gazed upon thee,  
Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,  
Didst vanish from my thought: entranced in prayer  
I worshiped the Invisible alone."

This thought of the indwelling One, of the informing and sustaining life throughout all the ranges of Nature's life, has been put into verse by that modern mystic, William Channing Gannett:—

"The Lord is in his Holy Place  
In all things near and far,  
Shekinah of the snowflake, he,  
And glory of the star,  
And secret of the April-land  
That stirs the field to flowers,  
Whose little tabernacles rise  
To hold him through the hours."

But man, though a part of created Nature in his body of flesh and blood, is also transcendent to Nature. His very sense of finiteness testifies to the immanence of a thought, a spark, of the Infinite. The philosophic Paul intimated this to the Athenian philosophers, when he declared,<sup>1</sup> "In him we live and move and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'" At the summit of created natures and aspiring beyond them, human nature is capacitated for the largest indwelling of the Creative Spirit. To this immanence of God in our humanity as his temple of flesh and blood theology has appropriated the term incarnation. This, essentially identical in meaning with the generic term immanence, gives specific emphasis to the truth that the Creator, immanent in all his creation, reveals himself especially in his noblest creature, man.

"The outward world," says Dr. Martineau, "is not the school of the purest and deepest. It is not God's characteristic sphere of *self-expression*. Rather is it his eternal act of *self-limitation*; of abstinence from the movements of free affection moment by moment, for the sake of a constancy that shall never falter or deceive. The finite universe is thus the stooping of the Infinite Will to an everlasting self-sacrifice; the assumption of a pa-

<sup>1</sup> *Acts* xvii, 28.

tient silence by the Fountain-head of boundless thought. The silence is first broken, the self-expression comes forth, in the moral phenomena of our life, where at last Spirit speaks with spirit, and the passage is made from the measured steps of material usage to the free flight of spiritual affection. The world reports the power, reflects the beauty, spreads abroad the majesty of the Supreme Cause; but we cannot speak of higher attributes, and apprehend the positive grounds of trust and love, without entering the precincts of humanity.”<sup>1</sup>

Christian theology, more prone to estimate the worth of human nature by its worst than by its best, and by its failures than by its achievements, has ignored the divine indwelling in man except in the peerless Man of Nazareth, its most illustrious exhibition, and has substituted this alone, exclusively termed “The Incarnation,” in place of the larger reality which both the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures represent as an experienced fact. The moral life of man has thus been deprived of an inspiring motive that Jesus and his apostles appealed to, and which the great mystics, as Eckhart and Tauler, in the mediæval darkness, made much of as the light of life.

To say that God incarnated himself in a single individual of all the multitude of the human family;

<sup>1</sup> *The Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 36. Longmans, Green & Co., London and New York.

that once, and once only, in all the ages of time he manifested himself in a human person — is a proposition which Dr. F. H. Hedge says, “cannot satisfy, if it does not shock, the unprejudiced mind. But expand the proposition; say that God is manifest (and that is the only logical sense in which we can speak of incarnation) — that God is manifest in every inspired teacher and prophet of truth and righteousness, in every holy, self-sacrificing life, in every martyr who, living or dying, devotes himself to any great and worthy cause — manifest in all in whom love of truth or love of God and man is the ruling motive and principle of action; say, with Paul, that all ‘who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God’ in precisely the sense, if not in the degree, in which Jesus was the Son of God; that the real distinction and peculiarity of Christ was not an exceptional but a sublimely typical nature and life; not that he was the only God-man, but the type of the God-man in all generations — say this, and you assert what no unprejudiced thinker and no philosophic student of religion will deny. And this I believe to be the real interior truth of the Athanasian doctrine, albeit Athanasius himself may not have seized it in its fulness, as certainly he did not unfold it in his teaching.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ways of the Spirit, and Other Essays*, pp. 353, 354. Roberts Brothers, Boston.



Not the Bible only, but also the philosophy of classic Greece, teaches this universal immanence of Deity in Nature and in man, to which in man the term incarnation has been appropriated. It was a cardinal doctrine of the Stoics who heard Paul at Athens. Schoolboys find it in their Vergil in such expressions as "*Jovis omnia plena;*"<sup>1</sup> "*Spiritus intus alit.*"<sup>2</sup> Recovered by modern thinkers, it has become a corner-stone of the theological reconstruction that is to substitute concord for discord in religious thought.

In all men and women who are constantly striving, even with many failures and lapses, for a higher good than present experience affords, we behold the manifestation of a Spirit and a Purpose, so infinitely richer and stronger and purer than our own as to drive us to the conclusion that it is God who besets us behind and before and lays his hand upon us. "The Indwelling God proclaimed of old" is not far from any one of us. We respond to his drawing power whenever we rise to higher levels of righteousness and truth. We yield to his promptings whenever we go down into the depths to lift up the fallen and to relieve the oppressed and to redeem the unfortunate. We show forth his pity whenever we are moved with compassion for the erring. "All hearts that struggle and aspire by Thee are lit." All minds that are con-

<sup>1</sup> *Eclogue* iii, 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Æneid* vi, 726, 727.



sumed with a passion for truth are mirrors of the Divine. All spirits that yearn for a vital sense of life eternal are witnesses of an indwelling life immeasurably vaster than this and of a Power infinitely greater than man. He who has seen the highest humanity striving to go higher has seen the Father of all men and has learned to see him in all men.

Now we understand what Jesus means when he says: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He is not thereby proclaiming himself to be God. Never does he do that. He is simply in all reverence and humility uttering his absolute conviction that his life is a revelation of the life of God in the soul of man. He knows that the Father is with him and in him, in every trial and under every woe, and therefore like a grateful son he bears witness to God's abiding presence. To those who cry, "Show us the Father," he shows his own life of human brotherliness as a revelation of the divine Fatherhood. He holds up his life of justice and mercy and self-sacrifice, and in it we see, not as in a glass darkly, but as in a clear, shining mirror, the life and love and purpose of God.

Let us note here as a fact impressed upon the thoughtful by many an experience, the mystery of human life. Man is not a simple being. He is both less and more than man. "Mere man" does not exist.

First of all, every human life is a part of nature and carries a brute inheritance. The ape and the tiger slumber in every man. If a man gives the beast in him free play, lust and cruelty and hatred show themselves in his life. The only devil is the beast in every man. Beastliness in any form is pure selfishness. Selfishness is sin, and sin cuts a man off from contact with the divine. It is only the pure in heart who see God. When a man is vicious or ugly or depraved, when he yields to his passions and is overcome by his animal nature, he becomes less than man.

But every man may go up as well as go down. He may live on a spiritual plane, and thus share the divine Life. He may strive as Jesus bids to be perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. He may pattern his life after the highest and best types of unselfishness. He may forget himself in the generous service of others. He may be prompted to deeds of pure self-sacrifice. Then the yelp of the beast in him is heard no more. His passions are under control. His life begins to manifest the higher things which belong to the spiritual life of man. This is the patience of the social reformer who works on long lines, and this is a revelation of the infinite Patience which bears so gently with stupid, blundering, wilful humanity. Truth is his portion, the truth which frees a man from narrowness and prejudice, and gives him deep sympathy

with all who are struggling to find the truth. And his restless desire to apprehend it more fully is a proof that infinite Truth exists to satisfy that yearning. Justice shows itself in his life. In his dealings with weaker and less fortunate brethren he is careful not to take unfair advantage of them. By being just himself he makes it easier for men to believe in an eternal Justice, which will at last right every wrong. Love is revealed by such a life. A man gives himself unselfishly to the life which calls not only for patience and truth and justice, but also for deep affection. He must "make channels for the streams of love, where they may broadly run." And thus his life becomes a mirror in which men see the clear reflection of the divine Love.

As a man thus rises from the lower life of sense and selfishness to the higher life of the spirit his life becomes more and more an unmistakable expression of the divine Life. As the man who is overcome by the brute within him is less than "mere man," so the man whose life is inspired by the divine realities is more than "mere man." He does not lose his complete and normal humanity in his fellowship with God, but his humanity is so deepened and intensified and enriched that it must be called a divine humanity.

To illustrate this thought, consider a mountain. The mountain rests upon the plain. It draws its

strength and power from forces that are deep down in the earth. It rose up out of the earth or sea. Its solid foundations of granite are the result of millions of years of change and growth. But its base is not that which gives it value as a mountain; it is its top. Across its sides run the shadows of the clouds above. From below the summit seems half-hidden by them, till we cannot tell at times where the mountain ends and the sky begins. Looking from the top, however, we see the landscape in its wholeness. We appreciate its beauty, because we no longer separate lake and river and valley from relation to each other. The real complete value of the mountain is found, not at its base in the slime and ooze of rocks and fossils and earth, but at the top where it almost blends with the sky.

So is it with our humanity. It has its roots in an underground life, deep down in the animal and vegetable world. But it has a higher life, across which run shadows from an unseen world, reflections of a diviner life. And at the top, from which this higher life sees its surroundings as a whole, and all its experiences are perceived as parts of a divine order, the life of man mingles with the life of God. And to the grandest and noblest souls who have lived in the flesh may be applied the lines of Emerson: —

“Draw, if thou canst, the mystic line,  
Which is human, which divine.”

Not our brute inheritance, but our heredity from God, makes our humanity real and complete. This is the truth of which the theological term incarnation is the symbol, a universal truth, not to be limited to any individual instance, however illus-  
trious. The ideal man is the divine man.

Here we face the fundamental choice on which the issue of our mortal life depends. A man may live in the basement of his life or in its upper stories. He may sink to the likeness of the beast or rise into fellowship with God. Thus Jesus lived in fellowship with God. So near did he draw to God that his purity and love and mercy and peace revealed to men the purity and love and mercy and peace that belong to the divine Nature. His life was like some lofty, distant peak, whose summit is dim in the horizon. Looking at his life from afar, centuries after his death, men could not tell where the human life ended and the divine began. Therefore, many have said, "This was Jehovah come down from heaven. I will kill you if you say he was a man."

Jesus the Christ, on the contrary, was a real man, an ideal man, not "a mere man," but a divine man. Why? Not because his life was let down from the skies into humanity, but because by effort and struggle it approached nearer the divine than any other life known to us. I believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ because I believe in the divinity of man.

“If Jesus Christ were a man,  
And only a man,—I say  
Of all mankind I cleave to him,  
And to him I will cleave away.”

The truth of this universal immanence of God in humanity, theologically called incarnation, has two aspects, like the two faces of a coin, obverse and reverse. It signifies much for God as well as for man. As it testifies of the divinity of man, it also witnesses for the humanity of God. Deity and humanity, however distinct, are identified in the unity of a common life — parental and filial.

By the humanity of God we mean that there is in the divine nature that which responds to human aspirations, affections, needs, and corresponds to human love. It means that God really enters into our human life and tenderly sympathises with us in our sorrows and joys. “He tents within the lonely heart.” How do we know it? He teaches by its manifestations in human life that the divine Love has entered into man. Every act which proceeds from pure and unselfish love points to a source deeper than man’s life. It is an inexhaustible fountain. No matter how often we draw upon this deep well, it is never dry. The love which is constantly redeeming a man’s life from baseness and selfishness and making him full of sympathy for others must have come from God. Nay, it is God incarnating himself in humanity.



“No man hath beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” So runs the New Testament. Or in the words of Posidonius, a noted Stoic philosopher, Cicero’s teacher, Pompey’s friend, who died half a century before Jesus was born: “God is the helping of man by man; and that is the way to eternal glory.” Man helping man is a sublimer sight than all the glory and beauty that any spot in Nature can exhibit, for in humanity we have what Nature cannot show, the divine Life becoming articulate, expressing itself, revealing itself as boundless redemptive love, the Word becoming flesh, and in Christlike souls dwelling among us full of grace and truth. A serviceable human spirit, always going about doing good, is the clearest revelation of the divine Spirit, the supreme manifestation of the love that is God’s. Nothing, in heaven above or on earth beneath, can more surely unveil the Infinite. We see the glory of God in Nature’s face, smiling or stern; but we see it still more in the face of Jesus Christ, the brother of the brotherless, the friend of the friendless, the compassionate leader of the sons of men, who through divine service show that they are sons of God.

We men are for this world the eyes and ears, the hands and feet of the Almighty. When he wishes to accomplish anything for men, to purify a life,



enlarge a heart, open a mind, strengthen a will, redeem a soul, regenerate a community, transform human society, he relies upon us to work with and for him. How eager we should be to co-operate with him! We should not only be eyes to the blind; we should also be eyes for God, to see what our brethren so sorely need of what he has given us to impart. We should not only be ears to the deaf; we should also be ears for God, to hear the first faint cry of his children in distress. We should not only be hands to the helpless; we should also be hands for God, to succour the sinking, and to save the despairing from being utterly cast down. We should not only be feet to the lame; we should also be feet for God, to run swiftly on mercy's errands. Messengers of his love, let us not idle away the time which belongs to him.

To change the figure: we ought, as tools and instruments which God uses, to keep ourselves ever ready for effective work, keen and not dull for human service. When he desires some great work for man to be done, and seeks an instrument with which to do it, what a pity if he finds you or me a dull tool! When the children of his spirit give themselves in utter devotion to work for humanity, they, wittingly or unwittingly, carry God to men. The Real Presence which the devout Roman Catholic adores in the sacred "Host," the consecrated wafer, is in every sympathetic and unselfish act.

Think of a few of the men and women who have brought God to men! Did not wretched prisoners feel that God was drawing near, when John Howard came into their cells to hear their grievances and to counsel them in their difficulties? Did not the foulest wretch feel the presence of the All-Holy when Mary Carpenter's sweet spirit gave him a blessing? Did not half-starved and cruelly chained insane men and women have at least a dim sense of the infinite Peace when Dorothea Dix came to their rescue? Did not wounded and dying soldiers in the Crimean hospitals feel that they had received a heavenly benediction when Florence Nightingale, "the lady with the lamp," placed her hand on their fevered brows? Did not loathsome men, dying with smallpox, feel the nearness of the Eternal when Sister Dora knelt and kissed them? Did not exiled and shunned lepers become aware of God when Father Damien came among them to live? Do not men and women of strange tongues and customs feel the approach of something akin to the divine when Jane Addams touches their lives? Do not the rough Labrador fishermen realise, when Dr. Grenfell moves among them in his ministry of healing, as the fishermen of Galilee realised so long ago when Jesus moved among them, blessing and healing, that God is very near?

Many lives reveal this redemptive love of the

Father Almighty. The unselfish patriot, the noble reformer, the patient mother, the loving father, the true friend, all reveal the humanity of God. The lives that have made history a revelation of God manifest it, heroes, martyrs, prophets, saints, poets, seers. But the clearest revelation in history and in human life of God's redemptive love is in the carpenter's son, Jesus of Nazareth. Is he not truly called the Lord of Love? In his brief life he set going influences of love and compassion which have regenerated man. Through the impact of his self-sacrificing spirit upon the race ideals and institutions have arisen which are transforming the world. Through him has come into our longing hearts the Spirit of peace, whose whisper cannot be drowned by the thunder of cannon in any unrighteous war, whose still, small voice is speaking in the midst of ridicule and doubt, through the moral power of great movements for social betterment and industrial reconstruction and civic regeneration.

The life of Jesus, then, did not close a gulf between God and man. It simply opened a fresh and ever-widening and ever-deepening channel for the infinite Love to pour into human hearts. The early Church, when it tried to express the sublime truth that "God was in Christ," as Paul affirms, put it upon a miraculous, physical basis. But modern Christian thought bases it more truly

and impregnably on moral and spiritual reality.

What the Christian Bible, the loftiest philosophy of pagan Greece, the great poets ancient and modern, and the God-conscious mystics unite in testifying of the Eternal Spirit as immanent in man, incarnated in our fleshly form, proclaims a two-fold truth, divinity in man, and, conversely, humanity in God.

God manifests himself in the flesh, therefore, not by coming down from heaven to be miraculously united with one individual, but by working up from below through the moral struggles and social ideals and spiritual aspirations of the race. An old saying lately become common affirms that "religion is the life of God in the soul of man." The life of Jesus is the clearest symbol of God in man, not because it is a miraculously exceptional human life, but because it is typical and prophetic of ultimate humanity. The difference between his and our divinity is a difference, not of nature, but of degree. The late Professor William Newton Clarke, a veteran Baptist theological teacher, has declared that "God's relation to human nature in the person of Jesus is no exception." He came into the world to reveal more clearly the humanity of God to his human children, and to show forth the divinity of man, to be "the firstborn of many brethren," that they might follow him in his ascent to the Father.

WILLIAM SAFFORD JONES.



VIII  
REVELATION





## VIII

### REVELATION

It is strange how slowly Theology has come to realise the potency of that simple but profound conception placed in its hands by Jesus — the divine Fatherhood. It is the old story of passing by the lowly door of simplicity in the search for the remote and difficult access to truth. We have not yet begun to realise the intensive meaning of divine Fatherhood, either in itself or in its application to our theological concepts.

#### I.

What does revelation mean in the light of Fatherhood? Let this be our point of approach. For an answer we can hardly do better than to ask the elementary question: How does a wise parent reveal himself to his child? His method is primarily one of adaptation. He must meet the child as a child. At first he gives him external gifts, teaches him about objective things, helps him to understand and use the world about him. In responding to this education the child seems simply

to be acquiring self-development, knowledge of and power over his environment. Yet all the time another and greater result has been in process of accomplishment. In teaching the child about things and their uses, the father has been giving *himself* to the child — the larger gift, the richer lesson. He may not have had this consciously in mind; nor is the child aware until long afterward of the self-impartation which he has been receiving. Ever the larger ends are hidden. The whole process is gradual, pedagogical, progressive. There is no haste, nothing premature, or total, or final; but slowly, secretly, line upon line, the revelation grows.

In the lesser, hides the greater; the human reflects the divine. The world is God's toy-house, his kindergarten, his gymnasium. He is teaching us himself through all its varied and inexhaustible treasure-trove. All truth, even the humblest is his — truth of form, of colour, of behaviour, of usage — all the complex details of this vast and astonishing universe which mankind has been gradually garnering and turning to account. Since every item of all this has worth and significance to man, as he forges his way onward through knowing and mastering his world, it all has a place in the divine economy. Not one minute fact, we may dare to believe, is unencompassed or without meaning to the Mind which knows the

whole, however differently it may appear to him than to us. The toy locomotives and cars, which fill the boy's imagination with all the might and mystery of being, bear quite another aspect to his grave-browed father; yet to him also, through sympathy, they are real and worthful and wonderful. If God is our Father, surely he sees the universe somewhat as we see it, through the love which implies consanguinity of nature. May it not be that he sees it not only with wider but with fresher vision? For, as Chesterton has finely said, "We have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we." If there is a *Ding an sich*, as Kant conjectured, God certainly knows it; but that need not prevent him from entering into our *Ding an sich*-less mental vision.

This does not mean that the outer world is the highest, or even in any sense an adequate, revelation of God. Indeed it is but a faint and deficient revelation of him. If we try to make of Nature a complete and sufficient revelation, we shall find ourselves, as Fichte warned us,<sup>1</sup> far enough from God. Yet, as even the eastern sky catches some faint hues of the glory of the sunset, so no

<sup>1</sup> "Lassen Sie sich darum ja nicht blinden oder irre machen durch eine Philosophie, die sich selbst den Namen der Natur-Philosophie beilegt, und welche alle bisherige Philosophie dadurch zu ubertreffen glaubt, dass sie die Natur zum Absoluten zu machen, und sie zu vergöttern strebt." *Nähere Bestimmung des Begriffes der Göttliche Idee*, § 5.

part of God's universe is so far from him as not to reveal something of its Source.

Nor can we longer regard the universe as merely for the sake of man. Our fellow creatures have a meaning and worth of their own, as Jesus implied when he said, "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father." Nature has her own task, as we have ours, part of which has been to fashion *us* on our physical side. Moreover, modern science is leading us to conjecture that Nature has her own lower order of freedom, as man has his higher order, and that she too has bungled somewhat at her task, as we certainly have at ours. In that case it is only Nature at her best that can truly reveal God, even in her own restricted sphere of revelation, just as it is only man at his best who can reveal God, in his higher sphere. But this is to anticipate.

## II.

In the light of the divine Fatherhood, then, we may make these three assumptions:—(1) Revelation may be assumed to be progressive. The parental method is the educative method—truth given as the mind becomes ready for it. (2) Revelation involves a mutual process of impartation and reception. Impartation alone could not be revelation; there must be a mind active and able to receive truth. Nor could pure discovery be revela-

tion, for that would mean winning truth from either an impersonal or a reluctant source. Revelation means the Hand down-stretched to the hand up-reached. The truth thus transferred may seem at one moment to be discovery; at the next it is realised to be impartation. In the subtle and wondrous interchange of truth between the divine mind and the human lies the inmost secret of revelation. With that gracious self-effacement which characterises love the divine Imparter conceals himself within the foliage of his truth that the recipient mind may exert itself to the utmost, and enjoy to the fullest its own coveted share in the achievement. How complete a perversion is it when, through this partial divine Self-concealment, the discoverer comes to imagine himself the maker, and thus resolves truth into the shifting, pragmatic product of the human mind! (3) All truth is revelation, including even that of the objective world of the senses. From the childhood of the race upward through the slow process of civilisation, the Mind of God has been speaking to the mind of man through a symbolism rough sometimes, but real.

### III.

When science begins, the earlier and ruder knowledge is transcended, but not falsified. Wrong inductions and ignorant and superstitious interpretations of nature are falsified and destroyed by

science, but not the basic knowledge back of them. That remains, yielding to new and truer theories built upon fresh ranges of discovered fact. This larger and better order of scientific truth is also revelation. The fact that it comes only through patient investigation and experiment does not alter its character. "God fulfills himself in many ways." Strange if science were not one. The scientists of an earlier, if not a greater day, felt the presence of the divine Mind in scientific discovery. Newton, closing his *Principia* with reverent words concerning "the Being who is everywhere, God Supreme," Kepler, thinking God's thoughts after him, Copernicus, Sir Charles Lyell, Hugh Miller, Clerk-Maxwell, Louis Agassiz, Dana — how assuring is the faith of such men, not gained by science, but greatened by it, hallowing all the beginnings of modern science with the light of reverence. If to-day, in the development of specialisation, and the closer pursuit of detail, and under the influence of the practical materialism of our time, the earlier consciousness of science as revelatory has grown indistinct, it is not to be assumed that this province of truth has been ultimately detached from the field of revelation. Rather, as Sabatier has so pertinently reminded us, "the true religion of science is that which holds research itself to be holy, the steady ascent of the spirit toward the



larger light.”<sup>1</sup> Science is possible only because this is a *Logos* world, a world of eternal Thought and Reason, as the very nomenclature of the sciences — *ologies* — indicates.

## IV.

Above the objective world of usage and of science, yet within it, is the truth of the world of Beauty. This, too, is a world of verity, and not of mere vagrant and fanciful existence. The world of the beautiful is a world of laws, of correspondences, of reason, as well as of feeling, and thus a world of revelation. Man, as he emerges from the lower orders of life, has the capacity for the beautiful, but neither a true knowledge nor a true love of it. These could hardly exist except as the Author of beauty had been calling them out in the soul of the generations, unfolding his own eternal beauty to the seekers after the beautiful. Here, too, the same law of search and impartation, giving and receiving, reigns. The universe overflows with beauty, yet only for the eye that perceives. A world of harmony is about us, and yet is audible only to the intent and listening ear. Superficial disharmonies must be ignored in order to catch the inner music. They that seek shall find.

<sup>1</sup> *Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*, p. 343.



All true beauty is revelation. Beauty is the seal-ring of God. Whatever bears its impress is, in so far, his. The impress may rest for a time upon what has become morally unsound and spiritually worthless and thus contradicts the nature of God, but in so far as anything, or anyone, is truly beautiful, in that respect it reveals God. If the Good, the True, and the Beautiful are divorced in this imperfect world, it is but a prophecy that, since they belong together, they shall ultimately be united. Meanwhile let us not mistake Beauty for another than a daughter of God, in whatever company she may be found. Born to reveal God, her mission cannot be lost.

## v.

From objective and æsthetic truth we ascend to a far higher form of revelation — ethical truth. Thus we come nearer to the heart of life, which is the heart of God. High and holy as moral truth is, it comes in the same lowly way, with folded chrysalis wings. If there is one lesson above another that our time should have learned, it is *not to judge values in genetic terms*. The evolution of morals should by this time have ceased to mean the devaluation of morality as consisting in mere conformity to changeful customs, and varying with time and place, rather than in steady pursuit of the ever flying goal of the moral ideal. It is a literally

preposterous inversion of reality to interpret religion chiefly by its rudimentary manifestations in animism, fetich-worship, and fear of unseen powers.

Eternal as moral truths are, and implicit in the race and in the individual, they must still be revealed in harmony with development. The parent knows this well. In his training of his child, the father soon finds himself passing the zones of mere objective knowledge and æsthetic truth, and penetrating to the quick and sensitive sphere of the moral imperative. Here he finds capacity for morality, rather than morality itself. He must impart of his own moral selfhood to the receptive, absorbing, moral nature of the child. True, even if he fails to do this, the thirsting heart of a child may find elsewhere that which has failed him here; for society has many ways of meeting the failure of "stickit" parents. But from some source the moral nature must be fed. Moral truth comes through the medium of personality. In other words it is a *revelation*, whose ultimate source must be the divine Personality. This truth Christianity has taught men to grasp and to hold fast. But to realise that the *method* of this impartation has been the slow and humble one of a gradual, progressive revelation — this is to the upholders of a book theory of revelation a hard principle to accept. The inherent objection that lies back of reluctance to admit the morality of the

Bible to be progressive is the difficulty of realising that that which is in itself eternal and immutable (right) can be revealed in mutable and imperfect terms. If there is an immutable standard of right and wrong, must it not somewhere be revealed in immutable terms? Can the Ten Commandments ever be in any respect outgrown? Can the word of the Lord to Moses, to Isaiah, to Paul, be transcended? Above all, can a word of Christ pass away? The answer is: *In spirit, no.* There is an eternal and immutable truth in these moral revelations that cannot pass or change; but the outward form and application cannot but change, for where there is life there is the inevitable change of growth, movement, progress.

With the eye fastened upon the evolution of morals, as that of our generation has been, it is easy to overlook the eternal, divine, imperative imbedded in morality; but we know that it is there. In the face of such sudden calls to heroism and duty as those attending the loss of the *Titanic* the theories which resolve duty into mere custom or utility become mere academic prattle. The timorous may cease to fear. The deeper insight of humanity will continue to maintain the conviction of the ages, that moral truth is revealed truth, and comes to man from the Eternal, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow cast by turning."

## VI.

The highest revelation is personal. All truth leads to the Supreme Person, as the streams flow to the sea. Truths of the sense world, of science, of art, of ethics, all radiate from God; and to follow the radii is to come to the Centre. "When found I truth, then found I thee!" exclaimed Augustine. Everything lies embosomed in Personality. The Ineffable Name is written, not upon all things, but within them. Some forms of truth are so remote from the Personal Centre that they catch and hold the mind as if independent of it, but only for a time.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, unity masters diversity, and Personality is recognised as the sole ground of unity. Dissevered truth mothers error. The truth of Nature is but half truth until it is seen in the light of Personality. The time has come for a new organisation of truth, not into a mere formal, impersonal unity, but about Personality. The organising principle of such a unity is that of values. Revelation is at war with itself until it rises into the language of personal disclos-

<sup>1</sup> "And because in that roof and crown of all things, God, we find the most perfect unity; and everything is stronger and more excellent the more thoroughly it is one; it follows that diversity and variety increase in things, the further they are removed from him who is the first principle of all."

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, iv, cap. 1.

ure.<sup>1</sup> Our noblest symbol of revelation is still, as it has ever been, light—that which makes all things clear and all things one—without which nothing could be that which it is. The “Father of lights” is the divine Personality.

## VII.

What relation do Bible and incarnation sustain to such a universal revelation? Have they lost, or gained, significance? Has this larger idea of revelation thrown Christianity into a subordinate place, as a mere incident, or chapter, in the wider, age-long revelation of the Spirit? Universal revelation certainly has done away with the conception of Christianity as an island of truth amidst a weltering sea of error; it is not consistent with the idea of Christianity as a cataclysm, a counsel of desperation, the last resort of a well-nigh defeated Deity. Yet it conserves and heightens the true place of Christianity, both as a consummation, in which all the spiritual values of the past are brought to fruition, and as a redemption, arresting a fatal downward trend, saving not individuals only, but turning the spiritual life of the race surely and steadily Godward. Christianity has long suf-

<sup>1</sup> “What man had been in search of, from the beginning, and was still in search of, was some personal being or power, higher than and superior to man.”

F. B. Jevons, *The Idea of God in Early Religions*, p. 19.

ferred theoretical isolation from the spiritual, as well as the general, life of the race. It has been represented not only as unique and life-giving, but as detached, condemnatory, supercilious, more like the priest passing by on the other side than as the Samaritan hastening to help. Its advocates and apologetes have made it too far a self-enclosed, unrelated, esoteric revelation rather than one which fulfils and interprets all others. If Christian revelation is all of revelation, and all outside of it evil and error, it is hard, not only to justify the ways of God to men, but to get a point of contact, a reasonable *pou sto*, for Christianity. We do not need an isolated revelation, we need a fulfilling one. Only as such can it be a real redemption, saving and restoring all that is true.

As presenting the purest and highest conceivable revelation of Personality, Christianity is the supreme revelation of God, and as such has not only the right, but the constraining obligation to give that revelation to the world. To fail to do so would be to be false to its deepest consciousness, and to restrain the joy and power of its life-giving message.

Christianity is incomparably rich in having as the *media* of this revelation an inexhaustibly vitalising book, and a matchless redemptive personality. The Bible is more than a literature; it is the written vehicle of a revelation. As such, it is peerless and



priceless; but it is not the revelation itself. It is here that the error has been made. The spirit has been identified with the letter. It is no wonder that such a letter, so pure and so commanding, has come in spite of its own warnings to be worshipped and glorified. The result of such idolatry could be no less than disastrous; for "the letter," even such a letter as this, "killeth." We are asked, "Is not the Bible, then, inspired?" Most certainly, it is inspired. Inspiration is the glow of spirit that attends the sincere expression of all highest spiritual truth. The Bible has such an incomparable wealth and purity of this truth that, in spite of its many uninspired and inferior parts, it is on the whole inspired as no other collection of literature is, and nobly deserves the title of the inspired Book. It contains so much of the word of revelation that we may call it *the Word*, if we use the term by metonymy, and not in the literal sense.

Yet it should never be forgotten that the Word *par excellence*, as the New Testament itself defines it, is the Word of God incarnate. Christianity is revelation through incarnation, in one pre-eminently pure and radiant life, of that Spirit which has ever been in humanity in true but partial and imperfect incarnations. "Fulness of grace and truth" in Christ illuminates and fulfils the reality, in all time before and after him, of the divine indwelling in the



race of which he, "the Son of Man," is the consummate and fadeless flower.

The relation of historical revelation to universal revelation has not yet been fully apprehended by Christian theology. It is fast becoming the most pressing and the most illuminating issue that challenges the Christian mind. The exclusive and fruitful emphasis upon the historical side of Christianity that has characterised the theology of the last fifty years is now yielding to a wider interpretation. The historical basis alone is felt to be too weak to bear the strain of the wider claims and deeper significances of Christianity. The profounder meaning of the *Logos* of the Fourth Gospel, and the Christ "mystery" of Paul—two conceptions mutually illuminating but essentially one—is beginning to dawn in larger radiance upon the vision of our time. As the unity of humanity grows clearer, the vital continuity of the entire religious life of the race becomes clearer, and the origin and explanation of it all is seen to lie in the activity of one Eternal Spirit, moving within the heart of man from the first, and coming to light in Christianity, "even the mystery which hath been hid from the ages and generations, but now hath it been manifested to his saints, . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Colossians*, i. 26-27.

## VIII.

Two further essential characteristics of revelation demand consideration. Revelation is in its very nature *individual*, as well as racial and social, and *open*, as well as definite and historical.

It is easy to exaggerate the individual character of revelation. The annals of religion are overflowing with ecstatic claimants of especial and often revolutionary revelations, such as would falsify or set aside much of the common body of revelation out of which they spring. Such convictions cannot be taken upon the strength of the recipient's own estimate of their validity and significance. The intensity of the experience colours the sense of its uniqueness, and often gives it the disproportion of fanaticism. Individualism runs wild in the field of religious experience. And yet, the word of the Lord certainly does come to elect and responsive souls with peculiar accents and with fresh content. It is thus that revelation makes its progress — through individuals who catch in advance and transmit the new light. The prophets were both apprehended by and apprehended the truth. The apostles were not merely bearers of a common Gospel; each had his own interpretation of it. Paul makes much not only of *the* Gospel but of "my Gospel." The mystics in all the ages have felt that they had each his own direct, imme-

diate, self-evidencing revelation of God. While they affirmed the accessibility of truth to every searching spirit, and did not hesitate to make use of the common fund of truth, they held that to each soul must come its own vision of the Eternal. Here then, is a characteristic of revelation which neither ecclesiasticism, nor orthodoxy, nor the emphasis upon social theory, should be permitted to overshadow.

Finally, it is characteristic of true revelation that it remains open. No idea is less germane to the genuine heart of revelation, and yet none has more persistently attached itself thereto, than that of a "closed revelation." The closed-revelation notion can have come through only one cause—a decadent faith. It is easy to see how such a conception arose in the case of Christianity. Here was a faith centring in a historical person who had gone from the earth. The essential traditions and doctrines relating to him and to the Christian cult called for early and definite settlement. Externally, everything urged fixity and finality. And yet there was a very remarkable fecundity and flexibility in early Christianity. The apostolic and post-apostolic fathers, while devotedly loyal to the tradition, were astonishingly vital and unfettered. The canon remained open. Theology was vivid, adventuresome, free. Speculation was as untrammelled as it was devout. This state of mind

continued, in the main, for three centuries. In the fourth century it yielded to the spirit of conservatism and formalism. The canon was established; worship was formalised. Doctrinal activity languished, rose to flame again in Augustine, and then died down to embers until the mediæval period. Mediæval theology received its inspiration not from Christianity but from Greek philosophy. Aristotle, not Christ, was its master. It started with the idea of a closed revelation, which it carefully set apart as a fixed body of truth. It then devoted itself mainly to the truths which it assigned to the humble handmaid of theology, philosophy. Revealed truths were disclosed in Scripture because unattainable by reason—the Trinity, the Incarnation, original sin, the sacraments and eschatology. These were to be accepted by “faith,” that is, by pure assent. Other truths, *e. g.*, the divine Existence, creation, immortality, accessible to reason, though likewise revealed, were capable of more complete apprehension and of more rational demonstration. It is true that Thomas Aquinas recognises a third form of knowledge of divine things, *i. e.*, “an elevation of the human mind to a perfect insight into things revealed,”<sup>1</sup> thus leaving the way open for the contemplation insisted upon by mysticism; but

<sup>1</sup> *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Bk. IV, Preface, Translation of J. Rickaby.

this access to truth does not occupy a very large place in the general scheme of revelation set forth by scholasticism.

This notion of a closed external revelation passed over with some modifications into Protestantism. The Bible came to be identified with revelation. In order to buttress and secure its claims miracles became the accepted guarantee and attestation of revelation, affording together with prophecy "the direct and fundamental proofs of Christianity."<sup>1</sup> But it was inevitable that this closed and sacrosanct body of revealed truth should in time come to be disregarded, if not distrusted. Thus rationalism arose, and in the eighteenth century carried theology far from the central truths of Christianity. The truths of "natural theology" came to have much more of authority than those of "revelation." Bishop Butler made a valiant effort to reinstate revelation by showing that the same difficulties are to be found in the system of nature as in revelation, an argument now recognised as logically doubling rather than lessening the burden of proof he undertook. But rationalism swept on, culminating in the *Aufklärung* in Germany, Rousseauism in France, and deism in England and America. It needed the keen scepticism of Hume and the more forceful criticism of Kant to break the sway of rationalism. At the same time Biblical

<sup>1</sup> Butler, *Analogy*, Chap. VII.

criticism and natural science undermined the foundations of the accepted theory of revelation. Thus, with the rise of the development philosophy, the science of comparative religion, and the new interpretation of history, the way was prepared for a deeper and more spiritual conception of revelation—a revelation inclusive of all truth, universal, progressive, yet centring in a responsive people, and culminating in a divinely human Redeemer. This revelation, so far from being closed, is forever open, vital, enlarging, because its Christ is the *Logos*, who has been revealing God to men from the beginning, the living Spirit, who is ever leading into all the truth.

JOHN WRIGHT BUCKHAM.

IX

REDEMPTION





## IX

### REDEMPTION

A NEW TESTAMENT writer makes the statement that Jesus "entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption."<sup>1</sup> It is startling for a moment to say that Jesus found redemption, but it serves to summon us away from artificial and external notions as to what redemption is.

We have thought of man on earth deserving punishment beyond the earthly sphere, punishment that used to be conceived in the form of fire, and we have thought of salvation as an arrangement by which he was to escape that punishment. Dr. Martineau has very fitly described this as "an unreal rescue from an unreal danger." Again, we have thought of redemption as freeing us from sin in the sense of positive wrong-doing, and this is why we shrink from thinking of Jesus as "saved" or "redeemed." The real nature of redemption cannot be better seen than in the case of Jesus himself. It consists in the ascent of the human spirit to power and victory through the recognition of its

<sup>1</sup> *Hebrews*, ix, 12. R.V.

unity with God and the world. It is what is often called "resurrection" in the Pauline Epistles, a word which in many passages has nothing whatever to do with the destiny of the body that is laid in the grave. Traditional interpretation has often missed the deeper spiritual meaning to be found in Paul's language. By the death of Christ he did not always mean the death of Jesus on Calvary, nor by his resurrection the rising of the body from the tomb. The words "death," "life," and "resurrection," are frequently used when there is no reference to the body. When it is said that "the wages of sin is death," it does not mean that our bodies die because we are sinners, and that physical death is the penalty. Adam's body did not die, nor become liable to death, in the day that he sinned. The meaning of the allegory is that the state of sin is a state of death. Now the state of sin is the state in which man acts as if he were a separate being, separate from the common life of humanity, and separate from God, and that is to be dead.

The spiritual life is introduced into this world in the matrix of the physical. We begin our life with the animals on the sense-plane; there is a time when the senses are everything to us. Then there emerges out of the dim unknown the first glimmerings of mind—"shy yearnings of the savage"—a new world opens to us in mental activity which brings with it its own work and pleasure;

we rise to the life of conscious reason; we know ourselves in a realm first above the animal, and then above the lower, or primitive, human. This first state of consciousness is our Adam-nature, our earth-nature, the meaning of the word "Adam" being "earth." Now in Adam, *i. e.*, in the Adam-nature, we all die. The human spirit coming from its home in God into this earth-nature dies to the consciousness of unity with God, develops the feeling that it is a separated entity, and with that pursues the interests of this separated self. The feeling of separateness is the illusion which accompanies the unfolding of individuality. Individuality is real, and nothing in our consciousness is more unquestionable. But that we are separate from God and from other men is an illusion; we only appear to be. Because we appear to be, we act much as if we were, and out of that comes all our trouble, and the sin of our mortal life.

Sin is wilfulness, and living from self and for self. This is the kind of life which is described as "death" in the Bible. It is what Jesus referred to as losing life in the case of the man who was trying to save it. The effort to save the smaller, separated life, results in losing the realisation of the deeper self, the larger life. And that is death; it is the death which is the wages of sin, the death out of which certain people have claimed to pass into life, the kingdom of darkness which they left

when they made their passage into the kingdom of light. To be the prisoner of the lower consciousness is to be dead to the higher meaning of life, dead to the grandeur and greatness of man's destiny, dead to a knowledge of one's own soul, dead to the privileges of the divine sonship. It is true that great numbers of people are still in this sense dead, or almost so. They have never made the grand discovery; they have never seen that there is a spiritual force within them by which they can burst the bands of death, and rise to "walk in newness of life"; the real man in them is asleep. That is why they act as they do; that is why they are ever in pursuit of the lower things; that is why their ambitions are material, and their lives selfish. In Adam, in the Adam-nature, we, the immortal spirits, die into an unconsciousness of ourselves and our destiny. In the coming forth of the divine Essence into manifestation we found individual existence. At first we did not know that we were individuals, but we discovered ourselves.

"The baby new to earth and sky,  
What time his tender palm is prest  
Against the circle of his breast,  
Has never thought that 'this is I':

"But as he grows he gathers much,  
And learns the use of 'I' and 'Me,'  
And finds 'I am not what I see,  
And other than the things I touch.'

"So rounds he to a separate mind  
From whence clear memory may begin,  
As through the frame that binds him in  
His isolation grows defined.

"This use may lie in blood and breath,  
Which else were fruitless of their due  
Had man to learn himself anew  
Beyond the second birth of death."

God must have needed our individualities, but we shall not realise the glory of God, nor our own glory, until we have thrown off the illusion of separateness which has grown upon our consciousness of individuality like a fungus on a tree.

When it begins to dawn upon us that in our deepest life we are one with God and the world, the process of reconciliation begins; when that is complete we have found the full redemption. Because this is the nature of redemption, we see that it was as necessary for Jesus as for any other. He was tempted like as we are, like as every individual must necessarily be tempted, to think of himself as a separate being, and not until he could get rid of that feeling could he obtain redemption. Positive wrong-doing is not what in the first instance constitutes the need of redemption. *We* should need to be redeemed even if we had never positively sinned, redeemed from the illusion which inevitably attaches itself to the feeling of individuality into the assurance and certain knowledge that God and

we are one, that he dwells in us, and that we live and move and have our being in him — an unfathomable mystery which the understanding can never compass, but which is the very heaven of the soul. For Jesus himself, then, as for all his brethren, the way of deliverance, the way into the heavenly sanctuary of life, into the identification of that human life with the life of God, was by the “offering of himself to God through the Eternal Spirit.” The particular was offered to the universal, the part was suffused with the sense of the Whole, through the Eternal Spirit, *i. e.*, through the power of that permeating Presence which makes all one. Now the essence of the Christian gospel, and certainly of Paul’s message, is that the state of death need not continue, and is not meant to be final. When the Christ-nature in man arises to consciousness he passes over from death to life.

“Life stirs again within the clod  
Renewed in beauteous birth;  
The soul springs up, a flower of prayer,  
Breathing his breath out on the air.”

“As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

And now the word “death” is used in a different sense, viz. to describe the attitude of the new man towards the old state of sin. It is said that he is dead to it; he was dead *in* it, and now he is dead *to* it. This was the real death of Jesus, “the



death that he died he died unto sin once." That could not be said of the body; it is the spirit that dies unto sin. It means that Jesus had recognised once for all that he was no mere earth-creature, to live a selfish life of mere natural impulse or of worldly ambition, but that he was the son of God, and one with the human family. The story of his temptation may be regarded as the story of that death. It was in refusing to take life from the selfish point of view, and in deciding to interpret it in the terms of worship and of service that he died to sin. Paul puts the positive side of that negative quite clearly in the words, "The life he now liveth he liveth unto God." That was the redemption he obtained, and that was real resurrection. Paul wants other men to do the same thing; "Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." We are said to be "buried with him through baptism into death." If there is any reference here to outward baptism, it is only as a symbol of the inward baptism of the spirit, which means utter consecration to the spiritual meaning and end of life. Just as living a life of selfish separation is called "dying in Adam," so living a life of union with God is called "dying in the Lord"—it is death to old ideals and aims, death to the dominion of sin, to the tyranny of the material; it is the end of imprisonment in the actual, and of subordination to

the lower consciousness. We have to undergo this death "that, like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life." This is redemption, and the outstanding demonstration of it for Paul was Jesus Christ.

It was also being demonstrated in his own personal experience. When he spoke of being conformed unto Christ's death, he did not mean the physical death of Jesus on the cross. That would be an external thing, in itself worthless, and also impossible to Christians in general. Paul meant that he must die unto sin as Christ died. When he spoke of attaining unto the resurrection from the dead, he was not thinking of a resuscitation of the physical body, but referring to a process already going on in his own life, and not yet complete. He says: "If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead," and immediately adds: "not that I have already secured it, or am already made perfect, but I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus." The resurrection was the ascent towards perfection. It was to its completeness he was trying to attain. The conformity unto Christ's death was part of the effort. It consisted in counting all things loss for Christ, setting aside even his own small standards of righteousness, giving up his own separated life, to be found in the

larger life of Christ through faith, *i. e.*, through response to God. It was in his own spirit, before the dissolution of the body, that Paul was being conformed unto Christ's death; it was in his own spiritual experience that he was already realising the power of Christ's resurrection, and ascending towards the perfect life, "pressing on towards the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This resurrection of the spiritual into rightful power and dominion over matter and over circumstance was the process of redemption. The process was divided by the "valley of the shadow," and, as in Jesus himself, would only be complete when the further side of the valley was reached in the world of spirits.

In the case of Jesus the real death took place before he died on Calvary; Calvary was only the concluding stage of that dying. His resurrection, too, was taking place during his earthly life in the realisation of his divine nature. This is the meaning of the words, "he was constituted the son of God by the resurrection of the dead"—surely not by the rising of his body from the grave, but by that spiritual rising to a life above the physical and the psychical; it is by that the divine sonship is "constituted" or "determined." That is the kind of death and resurrection which are to be repeated in the life of man, if he is to experience the true redemption. Paul bends over the man who is not yet

aware of this, and cries, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." The person so addressed is not literally asleep; he may be very much awake in the market and on the exchange; he may be very busy in the world's affairs, fighting, scrambling, aggrandising for self. The real man within him is asleep. Paul seeks to break his slumber, bids him arise and be himself, and tells him, "Christ shall give thee light." The Christ in man will put real values in their right place; the Christ in man will be a spiritual eye; and then the Christ of history shall fill that eye with light, and there will be newness of life; the world will be new, when the spirit shall rise into its kingdom. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things have passed away; behold they are become new."

Redemption is the coming of the soul to its own in the realisation of unity with God. This is finding life on a higher plane even than that of the intellect. It carries us beyond the highest ranges of philosophy. The work of science is very important, especially for the practical life, and a help towards religion, but the experience of redemption lies beyond it. The business of philosophy is to reflect upon life, and try to find its meaning, the meaning of its passions, faiths, doubts, prayers, and, if possible, the unity of all these. It is a worthy aim, and the quest has often been worthily

conducted. Nor is it without success, though the success is not complete. It falls short of satisfaction for the soul of man. Religious experience on its ordinary level carries us further, and gives us at least the clue to the solution, but unless there is progress beyond the rudimentary stage, unless the experience is developed, the full redemption is not realised. This is the point at which we must look deeper into ourselves until we discover the essence of our being, that Eternal Spirit which is in us, which is at once the Spirit of God and the deeper self of every man. The meaning of the failure we come to along one line of research after another, when properly understood, will be seen to be a Divine Urge to a higher plane of consciousness. To obey this urge will be to continue the upwardness of our history. As we came through the physical into the mental and intellectual, so we must transcend this into the spiritual, where the man knows himself at once with God, and is able to say with Jesus, "The Father and I are one." This knowledge is his redemption, it is its own evidence. The seeing soul has a certainty that never pertains to intellectual conclusions, and never belongs to productions hammered out on the anvils of intellect.

If only we understood it, the point at which intellect fails is the point at which we are urged to ascend to a higher knowledge, where nothing can

be proved because the possession is beyond question or description. There are those who know that *they* inhabit their bodies, know it as certainly as they know that their bodies walk the earth. They know that behind the body and deeper than the mind is the "I," the "ego," which persists. They are from, and of, and belong to, Eternal Being; they are aware not only of being able to think, but of being spirits. This spirit-consciousness gives a man a world beyond the world of mental conceptions and intellectual conclusions. The man who has entered it can never be persuaded that it is not a real world, much more real indeed than the other, and those who have not entered it cannot judge it; their pronouncement that it is mere superstition is of no more value than if a blind man denied the beauty of colour. This spirit-consciousness, in which the individual is redeemed into unity with the Whole, reaches its climax in what some people call the cosmic consciousness, where the individual knows that the identification has been made, and that the barriers have all gone down. The life which pervades the universe is *his* life, the Spirit which is everywhere dwells in him; the great prayer of Christ is then realised in his experience: "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us." That was the goal towards which Jesus would lead men, and it is from this point of view that he speaks of his joy be-



ing in them, and of their joy being full, and of giving them his peace "not as the world giveth." This is what the Hindus call "Brahmic splendour." This was Jacob Boehme's illumination, and Swedenborg's heaven. This was Paul's "third heaven," yes, this was his Christ.

Just as by the man on the sense-plane the man on the mental plane is not understood, so the man on the mental plane looks with a doubtful eye on the wider spirit-life; and even the man who has realised the spirit may still be far from the cosmic consciousness, and may wonder whether it be not superstition. Yet this last is our goal as truly as that the noontide follows the dawn. And the way to it is to cherish its beginnings, and to take its intimations as prophecies. We must cease to believe that our intellectual measurements can compass reality; the range of spirit is vastly larger than that of sense or reasoning, and we must not be afraid to trust it to its own enterprise. The sciences and philosophies of the world leave us with an unquenched thirst, and the thirst points to a deeper spring. The cry of the soul is for perfect union, for complete harmony, for an uplift above the plane of suffering and sorrow, for a vision of the majesty of the Good that swallows up all evil, of the Life that sings its song of victory over death and the grave.

In our best moments, in moments of profound



emotion, in moments of tenderest prayer, it is the deeper spirit that is putting forth its wings for the higher flight. Too often, alas, the sensuous man and the intellectual man utter their distrust, and push their interests, and the spirit is abashed. The first efforts of the spiritual must be encouraged, and it will grow in strength; some day it will come to its great baptism, and the heaven will open above it, and the wealth of God will clothe it with a conquering sense of sonship; divinity will descend upon the earth, and God will abide with man. That is the great redemption-experience. It recreates the world for us. Said Walt Whitman: "I cannot be awake, for nothing looks to me as it did before, or else I am awake for the first time, and all before has been a mean sleep." Referring to the Master-experience Jakob Böhme said: "All things are from it, and in it, and by it. If thou findest it thou comest into that Ground from which All Things are proceeded, and wherein they subsist, and thou art in it a King over all the works of God." Actual men and women appear different because they are looked at with an eye that sees beneath their surfaces, and with a love that beareth all things, and hopeth all things. Circumstances are different; difficulties are regarded only as opportunities; hardships as a sphere for heroism; sorrow brings a lamp in her hand to show new paths to God; the wilderness is full of voices and angelic

presences; the great Uplifter is always at hand; and death is a door opening upon a Shining Land. The spiritual discovery renews everything; it acts upon the world and upon the raw material of experience with a mighty transforming power, and imposes a character of its own upon events. Paul calls Christ "the head of every man." When the Christ in man is asleep the storms are terrifying, and the tempestuous nights are full of anxiety and fear; but when the Christ in us is awake, when we know that we are sons of God with an inheritance beyond the tempest, then we can speak to the winds and the sea, and there is a great calm. It is this discovery that enables us to act as masters, and puts us in command of circumstances. It is of men who have made this discovery that Maeterlinck's words are true: "Whatever may happen is lit up by their inward life. When you love, it is not your love that forms part of your destiny, but the knowledge of self that you will have found, deep down in your love—that it is that will help you to fashion your life. If you have been deceived, it is not the deception that matters, but the forgiveness whereto it gave birth in your soul, and the loftiness, wisdom, completeness of this forgiveness—by these shall your life be steered to destiny's haven of brightness and peace; by these shall your eyes see more clearly than if all men had been faithful." This is one of the "heavenly

places in Christ Jesus" into which a man comes when he is raised up with Christ; this is the Zion into which the redeemed come with singing, and from which sorrow and sighing flee away.

When a man has discovered his true inner life, and therein realises union with God, and is able to interpret, govern, and transform the outward life by the inner power, he is redeemed from separateness and its resulting sin, and is raised up like Christ from the dead through the glory of God the Father to walk in newness of life. We move here in a region far above that of mere intellect, the region of spiritual assurances which transcend all formulated thought. Maeterlinck says that we should live as if we were always on the eve of the Great Revelation. Whatever may be happening in the outward sphere, we must never allow ourselves to forget that there is a spirit in us which is called to rise through the physical, the psychical, the intellectual, to realise redemption on the heights of its own sublime consciousness of God. Nor is this a mere tending upward by the imprisoned human spirit; it is a being drawn upward by the power of the Over-Soul, which is God. "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the son of God." This is a word which has its application to all men. Just as the sun lays its power on the earth in the spring to quicken its latent life,

so the power of the Highest is to overshadow our earth-nature, to quicken the seeds of the divine sonship within us, and bring the Holy Thing, the son of God in our hearts, to victorious life.

T. RHONDDA WILLIAMS.



X

JUDGMENT





## X

### JUDGMENT

DIVINE judgment, in the domain of theology, denotes the arbitrament of God, the Judge of the world, upon the conduct of nations and individuals. In the monotheistic religions that parented the Bible this arbitrament is not arbitrary, or capricious, as at times was that of the divinities of the Greek Pantheon. Its impartiality is based on the postulate that justice is one of the attributes of Deity. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justice?"<sup>1</sup> asks Abraham. Says the author of Job,<sup>2</sup> "Yea, of a surety, God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment." In Jeremiah we read, "I am the Lord who exerciseth loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth." And the author of the 89th Psalm, in an apostrophe to Deity, declares, "Righteousness and judgment are the foundations of thy throne," which we find repeated in Psalm 97.

In the earlier Bible theories of the divine super-

<sup>1</sup> *Genesis* xviii, 25.

<sup>2</sup> xxxiv, 12.

vision of the affairs of man retribution on earth is directly meted out to each individual, as we read in Proverbs xi, 31, "Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; how much more the wicked and the sinner." Therefore we find prosperity and adversity directly traced to respective virtue and vice. The Flood is brought upon the world because it is a sinful world, and the righteous Noah is saved. So Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed because they did not contain even ten righteous men. Egypt is plagued because of cruelty to Israel. The priestly author of the Book of Chronicles carries this theory to such an extreme that he even ventures to modify the record of Israel's kings, so that he may present the edifying record of righteous kings, long lived and prosperous, with the wicked cut off in the midst of their days.

In the early development of this doctrine just judgment is meted out to the tribe or nation that is made to suffer for the sin of its separate individuals. Because of Achan's sin in stealing some of the enemy's booty the army of Joshua meets its first reverse. Jonathan's transgression is discovered only by an unexpected defeat of Saul. This same note is sounded through the book of Judges and the early monarchy. We find it expressed also by the Hebrew prophets. But notice here that no especial consideration is shown by them for Israel.

Amos treats the fate of Syria, Philistia, Moab equally with that of Israel, the impartial Judge of the earth punishing the sins of all alike. Nay, further, mark these significant words in Amos iii, 2, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities."

As this great religious conception of reward and punishment reaches its fuller development, retribution becomes individual. We find the classic expression in the Psalms,<sup>1</sup> "Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for thou renderest to every man according to his work." The prophet Ezekiel devotes the entire 18th chapter to remove the misconception of the Second Commandment — that because children *suffer* for the sins of their parents, that they are necessarily *punished* for the sins of their parents — a very different idea. The summary of his thesis is best expressed in the 20th verse, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." The most distinct denial of vicarious punishment — a different thing from vicarious atonement — in the Hebrew Scriptures is found in Exodus xxxii, 33, where the offer of Moses to die for his people is

<sup>1</sup> lxii, 12.

distinctly refused. "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out from my book."

The book of Job marks a step yet more advanced. Job, the most righteous of all men, is afflicted with most severe calamities. This new note is struck to warn man that the insight is not always his to directly trace the deeds of the Almighty, that God's ways are past our finding out; that although, in the Psalmist's words, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect, and all his deeds are done in faithfulness," yet the power is not given to finite man with his limited vision to trace results to the divine causes. Only he who knoweth not the limitation of time or space can have mapped out before him the history and the destiny of the human race, and can mete out far-reaching retribution.

Indeed, the later prophets always found it difficult to square the sufferings of the righteous with the justice of God in a way to convince the multitude. Isaiah, greatest of the seers, in his exalted watch-tower sees the Omnipotent using vast empires, such as Syria and Babylonia, as mere pawns in the carrying out of his purposes. Often did the loyal prophets endeavour to answer the disquieting query of Israel, How is it that we, faithful worshippers of the one God, should suffer defeat and exile, while the idol-worshipping nations are triumphant? To such the prophets preached the lesson of faith. Divine judgment was not always im-

mediate, but at times postponed. Ultimately, "in latter days," or at "the end of time," there would come a *Day of Judgment*, when all wrongs would be righted. The heathen would be punished. Israel, the faithful, would come into its own, with its Messiah king exercising universal sway. Or better still, some struck a finer note — in the latter day, the heathen would not be destroyed, but converted. So Isaiah declared,<sup>1</sup> "It shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established . . . and all nations shall flock unto it." So taught Zachariah,<sup>2</sup> "The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, let us go speedily to entreat the favour of the Lord . . . I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations will come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem." And again: "On that day, shall the Eternal be acknowledged One, and his Name One." So, while now and then in the exilic prophets we meet the conviction of the overthrow of the heathen and the exaltation of Israel, on the other hand we find also portrayed the impartial Judge, punishing and scattering Israel, saving but a remnant. Even this remnant will be despised and rejected, that through its bruises the nations may be healed. This is Isaiah's doctrine of "the suffering servant." In the prophet Joel "the day of God" marks the culmination of evil. In Malachi,

<sup>1</sup> ii, 2, 3.<sup>2</sup> viii, 21.

all workers of iniquity will be destroyed. The prevailing note, then, of the later prophets is, that when the Almighty metes out individual retribution, it will lead to a change of heart. All nations will then enjoy the blessing of the new condition, and only the impenitent will be destroyed. Thus religious thought ultimately rose to faith in the divine judgments as not vindictive or vengeful, but essentially corrective, and a beneficent instrument for redemption from sin and the suffering consequent to it.

The reason why the prophets singled out Israel for distinction and salvation, is that they are the witnesses of God, that through them the knowledge of God and his righteousness is to be brought to mankind. They are selected, not for their own sake, but for humanity's sake. This is best demonstrated in Isaiah,<sup>1</sup> "It is too light a thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

The idea that divine retribution would be postponed to an indefinite "day of the Lord," or "latter day," since direct relation of one's deeds to one's destiny was not discernible on earth, gradually led to the doctrine of a future life, and a day of judg-

•      <sup>1</sup> xlix, 6.



ment postponed to the hereafter. This finds its first complete expression in Daniel: "Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." We read in Isaiah,<sup>1</sup> "He hath swallowed up death forever. The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." And again:<sup>2</sup> "The dead shall live, the dead bodies shall arise. Awaken, sing, ye that dwell in the dust." In the Mishna, *i. e.*, "second law," developed by the Rabbis from the Bible, we read, "They who are born are doomed to die, the dead to be resuscitated, and the reanimated to be judged, to make known that the Omnipotent, Omniscient Judge, Witness, and Prosecutor will judge thee hereafter. Blessed be he in whose presence there is no unrighteousness, no forgetfulness, no respect of persons, no acceptance of bribes. Know also that everything is done according to the account." So in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus<sup>3</sup> we read, "In all thy matters, remember thy last end, and thou shalt never do amiss;" and <sup>4</sup> "Remember thy last end, and cease from enmity." Here then, toward the end of the post-exilic era, we have the doctrine of the

<sup>1</sup> xxv, 8.

<sup>2</sup> xxvi, 19

<sup>3</sup> vii, 36.

<sup>4</sup> xxviii, 6 and 7.



great judgment, following the resurrection, fully developed. The rabbinic opinions vary as to the divine method. One teaches that the intercession of the meritorious will save the doubtful.

It is interesting to notice how very different were the opinions of the cheerful school of Hillel from the sombre school of Shammai. It is from the latter school that we get the gloomy theories of divine retribution and eternal punishment found in the apocryphal book of Second Esdras and in the book of Enoch. The Christian Church derived its theory of eternal torment from the Shammai school. While it is true the more liberal Greek theologians opposed this belief, the Latin theologians prevailed, and by the time of Justinian, *i. e.*, about 544 A. D., endless punishment became a cardinal Christian doctrine. The Jews, however, followed the optimistic and benignant school of Hillel, who emphasised the principle that "God inclines the scales toward mercy."<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that earthly places came to be symbolised as the respective domains of the blessed and the accursed. The lost earthly Paradise, or Garden of Eden, became the heaven of the righteous. The Ge-Hinnom, the dark valley where the bodies of malefactors were thrown, became the Ge-Henna, the hell of torment for the wicked. While in the Talmudic era the belief in a hell of punishment is not entirely absent,

<sup>1</sup> Mishna Aboth.

it always played a minor part in Jewish theology, as distinct from its vital import in the theology of the Church. The belief in an everlasting and hopeless hell was never abrogated by the Synagogue. It simply died out.

In any case, the prevailing opinion of the Talmudic authorities was that extinction, not everlasting punishment, was to be the fate of the wicked. This note is also sounded in the daily prayers of the old Hebrew ritual, as in the eighteen-benediction prayer: "Let the wicked perish and let them be speedily exterminated."

This is a step in the direction of modern thought. Ibsen's almost worthless *Pier Gynt* must be cast back into the melting pot. On the other hand, immortality is viewed as an achievement, or, in Kipling's phrase, "the glory of going on." This is best expressed by Matthew Arnold:

"No, no! the energy of life may be  
Kept on after the grave, but not begun;  
And he who flagged not in the earthly strife,  
From strength to strength advancing — only he,  
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,  
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life."

The reason why the Rabbis, with but a mediæval outlook, were led to take a hopeful view of the future, lay in the fact that the institutions of the Synagogue, based on the Mishna, offered an annual opportunity to the individual to regenerate his life.

This is the important institution of the New Year, and the Day of Atonement, following ten days later, directly allied with it. Thus the opportunity was annually offered by the Synagogue for the individual to wipe out his evil past, and through sincere repentance to win divine pardon and begin life afresh. The Day of Atonement still exercises the most potent influence in the religious life of the Jew to-day. Side by side with this great institution we find very advanced views taught by the Rabbis. Rabbi Jose taught, "Man is judged every day," and Rabbi Nathan, "God judges man every moment." These progressive views bring us nearer to modern concepts of the ways of God with man.

We believe in the evolutionary process, not only in the material but also in the ethical realm. Just as we have given up the earlier theory that God created the world by fiat, at one moment of time, so we have let go the doctrine that at the moment of death we are translated to heavenly perfection, or doomed to hopeless punishment. God's relations with his creatures, as we humbly and reverently interpret them, are a continuous process, with an ebb and flow, as reflected by our constantly changing character. Character, like life, is an unfolding story. Said a Hebrew sage, "It is not for thee to finish the work, nor art thou free to desist from it." In the words of Goethe's Faust, "*und*

*webt des Gottes lebendige Kleid,"* man is ever weaving the garment of God. The Divine tribunal never adjourns. Divine judgments are subject to continuous appeal. New evidence is evolved daily, new witnesses for the defense and for the prosecution daily appear. The procedure is slow, fluid, and continuous.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small:

Though with patience he stands waiting, with exactness grinds he all."

Divine judgment is therefore less an action from without, than a reaction from within. Our fate lies "not in our stars but in ourselves." Like Samson, we pull down the temple upon ourselves, yet, unlike him, we can ever emerge from the moral wreckage to the rehabilitation of character. In theological language, "the door of repentance is ever open."

There runs a saying of 'Akiba' (Ethics of the Fathers, iii, 25), couched in the old parable style: "Everything is given in pledge. The office is open. The brokers give credit, the ledger is open and the hand writes. Whosoever will borrow, comes and borrows, and the bailiffs go round continually every day and exact from the man, whether he will or not. And the judgment is a judgment of truth."

Sometimes we see the rise and fall of a human

soul portrayed, as in the lives of Saul and Solomon. The divine "rejection" is only the final outcome of accumulated frailty. These began nobly and ended in anti-climax. Others rise "from strength to strength." History is the unfolding story of divine judgment. Says an old tradition, The generation of the flood was given one hundred and twenty years to repent of its ways. It was four hundred years before "the iniquity of the Amorite was full." Babylon was weighed in the balance for centuries before it was finally "found wanting." Rome began to fall at a date perhaps earlier than that specified by Gibbon, ultimately collapsing through its own rottenness. Its Eastern half did not succumb till 1453. The Turk was then vigorous and idealistic. His decline set in with the Occident's rejuvenation. Is his day of judgment at hand? Spain and Russia have reaped as they have sown. France's revolution began with Louis the Fourteenth's despotism. The social sins of our cities are tainting the race. Their judgment is sleepless, terrific, remorseless, reaching to the "fourth generation of them that hate me."

Thus, deeds that make events are freighted with reward or punishment. The abolition of slavery has brought its own divine grace. The wicked continuance of war is still bringing an annual harvest of misery. We shall continue to suffer morally from its depravation and physically from its ravage,

until we "beat our swords into ploughshares, and learn war no more."

We moderns of all creeds feel that divine judgment is perpetual, that every deed in some subtle way registers its reward or punishment in the exaltation or the degradation of our nature. In man's latest conclusion as to God's judgment we still turn to the classic text in Psalm lxii, 12, "God rendereth to every man according to his work." Perhaps the modern teacher might add as an inference, "according to his opportunity." Again he finds the root of some sins of the individual in society itself.<sup>1</sup> So the old notion of the interrelation of human responsibility crops out again.

But while the modern moralist may divide the blame of our sin and the merit of our virtue between inherited traits, the influence of environment, or the accident of circumstance, we must beware

<sup>1</sup> The varying beliefs have not been confined to theory, but have always reacted practically in human institutions. As long as the theory prevailed that an unforgiving God condemned his erring creatures to fire in a purgatory or a hell, human punishments were more or less savage — torture, mutilation, the stake. As that theory has given place to the conception of the merciful Father, who "chasteneth whom he loveth," and "doth not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men," the revengeful note has dropped out from the penology of modern governments. The model prison in advanced countries to-day is no longer vindictive but reformatory. Are not the parole and the suspended sentence human imitations of divine longsuffering? Here in the very latest of our institutions we discern an exquisite *imitatio Dei*.



that we do not rob the individual of his ultimate responsibility. Man is constantly accountable to God, who judges the deeds and the motives of all his creatures. This is one of the earliest teachings of religion. Let it abide as the latest.

MAURICE H. HARRIS.



XI

ATONEMENT



## XI

### ATONEMENT

#### I. *Atonement as Reconciliation.*

1. Departure of modern from traditional thought.
2. What is common to modern and traditional thought.
3. What is unique in modern thought.
4. Reconciliation as the act of God.

#### II. *Atonement as Satisfaction.*

1. Our social thought unlocks Scripture.
2. World in process of redemption.
3. Necessity of Cross life.
4. Foundation in mystery of God.

FEW men to-day have any "doctrine of the atonement." Many repeat the phrases and use the figures in which traditional theories of it found expression, but, when pressed to state their meaning, it becomes evident that they have abandoned the theory itself. Some turn obscurantist, and say that "somehow, some way," an atonement is made. Others frankly admit that they have no theory, but that they believe in the fact of the atonement. The distinction between the fact and theory is most important, but a fact which remains uninterpreted is of little value. The moment one begins to interpret the fact he begins to theorise. A living

theory or doctrine of the atonement is inevitable and of great value. If it springs out of life and returns quickly to life, an interpretation of the fact of the atonement clarifies the thinking and fortifies the will. Moreover, the great preachers and hymn writers of the Church up to the modern age have had theories of the atonement, which lie back of their words as the inspiring thought. This essay is an attempt to clarify the writer's own mind on this great theme, and to move other minds to give more thought to the interpretation of the atonement than it is receiving to-day. With the discovery of the social teaching of the Bible, and with the social view-point of modern thinking, a new approach to the atonement is made possible.

### I.

The etymological meaning of the word atonement is at-one-ment, that is, a state of harmony or concord. In its dictionary use<sup>1</sup> it implies that a condition of disunion, of dissension or controversy has existed, and now unity, reconciliation or peace has taken its place. In the only passage where the word "atonement" occurs in the Authorised Version of the New Testament the Revised Version, more literally translating the Greek, substitutes the word "reconciliation."<sup>2</sup> Common

<sup>1</sup> See *The Century Dictionary*.

<sup>2</sup> *Romans* v, 11.

speech also uses the word atonement to denote the act or thing which restores harmony, as the satisfaction which is made for injury, or the equivalent which is given for suffering. In trying to think out the true idea of the atonement it may be helpful to recall these meanings of the word itself in common usage, and also to remember that the word simply expresses realities of every-day life, the disunions and reunions, the dissatisfactions and satisfactions of men in their relations one to another.

In thinking of the atonement we are considering the relation between God and man as an atone-ment, or state of harmony, between the divine and the human. Shall we follow the dictionary use of the word, and assume that between God and man there has been a breach, that the human has been at enmity with the divine? It is right at this point that modern thought about the atonement parts company with traditional thought. Traditional thought has implicitly followed the line struck out by St. Paul, the path-breaker of Christian theology. He necessarily reasoned on the premises supplied by his training in the best thought of pious and learned Jews of his time, and applied them to his own experience of the grace of God. What he thus did we would do, interpreting the atonement in terms of our own thinking. If thus we are compelled to interpret it differently, it is

because his premises can no longer be accepted; they belong to the knowledge which he said should be "done away"; the necessary apparatus of modern thought must be found in modern knowledge.

Up to the formulation of the doctrine of evolution by Charles Darwin, and of the theory of the origin of the Hexateuch by Graf-Wellhausen, Christian thought believed in the historical truth of the narratives in Genesis of the creation and the fall of man. Man, so the teaching ran, was made to enter into harmony with God; he was morally perfect, and lived his life in Eden in complete communion with his Maker; then man disobeyed the command of God, and fell from the state of blessed relations with him; since that fall, humanity has been at enmity with God. It is this dissension which all traditional thought assumes. With deeper knowledge of the world and of the Hebrew literature modern thought has been compelled to discard the interpretation which St. Paul based on the legends of Genesis. Man was not superimposed upon this earth by God, but through divine agency has evolved from lower forms of life. He was, in the beginning, no more at variance with God than a new-born child is at variance with its father. As a human father leans over his baby, takes it into his arms, calls out, month by month, its awakening soul, keeps it close to his mind and

heart, guiding, restraining, inspiring it at every step of its development, so the heavenly Father watches over and lives with and in humanity, his human child. Neither was man in the beginning more in harmony with God than is a new-born child at one with its father. At birth it is a little animal, its physical necessities dominating and determining its existence; yet an animal with intellectual, social and spiritual potentialities. It grows into spiritual relations with its father. By mistakes, disobediences, experiences good and bad, the potential nature of the child unfolds. So humanity, the son of God, potentially capable of perfect union with the Father, has grown, and is continuing to grow, into at-one-ment with God.

Modern thought has discarded the teaching that in "Adam's fall we sinned all," and that we are "by nature children of wrath"; but it must take into account the deep and common experience of sin. In the presence of some terrible crime men who know themselves will say, with Frederick Robertson, "the germs of the worst crimes are in us all." Some men are even tempted to say, "We are half beast, half devil." Rather we are half animal and half divine, our task being, as Browning says,

"to pass approved  
A man, for aye removed  
From the developed brute;  
A God, though in the germ."



Consciousness of having sinned is, however, not always even an accompaniment of wrong-doing. We possess an almost unlimited capacity for self-deception. Self-knowledge is by no means common, and, as Socrates insisted, should be one of the high aims of life. But when a man does awake from moral sleep, and becomes conscious of his sin, one thing stands out clearly: he feels that God is against him, and that there is a breach between the human and divine. Let a man break the law of the State, and at once he is transformed from a free citizen into one who avoids every policeman, and expects a summons any moment. St. Paul accurately described human experience when he called this mind in the awakened sinner, "the spirit of bondage to fear." Man, called to be a son of God, in living at-one-ment with the Father, finds through sin that, like Adam in the old tale, he does not go to meet God in the cool of the evening, but hides among the trees. From the depth of human experience goes up the cry, "O give me the comfort of thy help again; establish me with thy free spirit."

The experience of sin is not the only thing that breaks the harmony which, potentially at least, exists by nature between man and God. Intellectual doubt, especially in this modern age, has made many spiritual orphans. Where religion and the formulations of religious thinking are identified, men who have ceased to believe the creeds and doctrines have

frequently discarded religion itself, have thrown out the baby with the bath, as the German proverb says. Sometimes it is the very greatness of the new knowledge of the universe which has destroyed our peace. "We have gained an abyss where a dewdrop was asked." With biological science particularly in mind Browning has written,

"It may be the mission of this age  
To shake this torpor of assurance from our Creeds;  
Re-introduce the doubt discarded, bring  
The formidable danger back we drove,  
Long since, to the distance and the dark;  
And man stands forth again  
Pale, resolute, prepared to die."

Sometimes it is the knowledge of the suffering which seems inherent in evolution, or the experience of suffering, which leads men to believe that "the Great Companion is dead." Caused by one experience or another, doubt has "shivered the universe" for many, as it did for Carlyle, destroying their at-one-ment, their concord and harmony, with God.

This modern age is not different from preceding ages in its deepest needs and highest aspirations. All men aspire to be at one with God. Mean by "God" what they may — the ethical imperative, the divine idea, the perfect life, the holy will, the incarnate love — men can think of nothing higher for themselves and for society than to be in har-

mony with that, at one with God. When, moreover, men are not at one with God they are at war with themselves, and are in wrong and unsatisfactory relations with their fellows and society. Men are so made, and life is so constructed, that only in moral oneness with God is it possible to have peace. "O God," said St. Augustine, in a rueful retrospect of his early years, "thou hast made us for thyself, and we cannot find rest until we rest in thee." But experience tells us that just in proportion to our consciousness of sin and the corresponding height of our ideals, or our thought of divine perfection, in proportion also to our dream of a perfect society, do we realise that we have not the desired peace, the at-one-ment with God.

How can this at-one-ment or peace be had? Having lost through sin the free spirit of the sons of the Father, how can it be restored? Having entered a period of spiritual obscuration through intellectual doubt, how can illumination be regained? The cruder forms of religious teaching have answered the first of these deep questions with blood sacrifices and satisfactions. "Shall I come before the Lord with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" To this anxious inquiry the more spiritual forms of religion

have replied that "the sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, wilt thou not despise." And they have taught that what God desires of man, in order that he may be at one with him, is "to do justice and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."<sup>1</sup> It was Jesus who gave the final answer to the question, how men who had lost the freedom of the sons of God may regain it. It is by faith on their part, not only that God will accept the sacrifice of a broken spirit, but that *God seeks the lost*. As a shepherd seeks among the hills the lost sheep, and finding it goes home rejoicing, so God seeks every child; as a woman sweeps her house diligently for the lost coin, and finding it calls in her neighbours to rejoice with her, so God, the heavenly Father, works for the restoration of every man; as a father, whose boy has turned his back on his home and gone into the far country, longs for the boy's return, and goes forth to meet him with the ring and robe of sonship, so God throws the everlasting arms about his sons who were dead and are alive again, who were lost and are found.

Jesus in the Gospel story seems not to have been called upon to meet the intellectual doubt so characteristic of our modern age. The Hebrew mind was the practical reason; it is the Greek in us which questions all things. And yet it is the application

<sup>1</sup> *Micah* vi, 6-8.

of the principle of Jesus to our intellectual life that has brought peace to multitudes of troubled minds. By the recognition and faith that God is the light <sup>1</sup> which goeth forth of himself to enlighten every man born into this world, men have won peace of mind.

“Our little systems have their day;  
They have their day and cease to be;  
They are but broken lights of thee,  
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

Men have come to see that the very doubt itself is, in a deep sense, evidence of the divine presence in them seeking expression through the reason; and that he who goes into the troubled waters with that faith comes forth healed. Says one who had gone through doubt, “I could not have set out to find God, had not God been already by my side.” What is this but the recognition, on the part of the doubter, of the truth of Jesus that God takes the initiative?

So clearly does the Christ stand before our modern minds as the revealer or word of God, so clearly does God appear to us as like the character of Jesus, it is with great difficulty that we can appreciate the so-called satisfaction and governmental theories of the atonement. These held that God would not or could not act until certain conditions had been met. On the contrary, Jesus associates with publicans and sinners, to the scandal of the righteous folk of

<sup>1</sup> For the teaching of the Catholic creeds see A. V. G. Allen, *Christian Institutions*, p. 354 f.

Jerusalem, and furthermore committed what they called blasphemy, by saying that he was doing simply what he saw the Father doing. He taught that God was like him and he was like God, a seeker of those who had lost their sense of being free spirits born of God, in order that he might make them no longer slaves of sin but free men indeed. The mystery of all mysteries of life is the fact that in our midst is One who seeks us though we be publicans and sinners, and because we are publicans and sinners. Demonstrate it to the intellect we cannot; prove it in terms of science and philosophy we fail to do. But demonstrate it to all broken-hearted and contrite spirits who will to believe it we can; "not in the persuasive words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." "For the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ."

The atonement is the act of God himself. The real contribution of St. Anselm to our thought of the atonement was this, though his way of expressing it as a conflict between divine justice and divine mercy we reject. St. Paul said, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." True; true also that God is ever in man, reconciling the world more and more unto himself. The Christian goes to the drunkard in the gutter with



no message to save himself. His word to him is, "The Father seeks you, is here, more ready to give than you to receive; trust him, let your will go with his will in its way with you; infinite energies are yours, strength for your weakness, courage and hope for your despair." Every Christian and every psychologist knows what happens when the man acts on that word. The psychologist who has not yet correlated his science and his religion may say that the energies of man in the sub-conscious realm have asserted themselves. The Christian says with the apostle, "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure."

## II.

So far we have had in mind only one meaning of the word atonement, as an at-one-ment or reconciliation which is brought about after the harmony or concord has been broken. The word is also commonly used to describe that which restores the harmony, the price that is paid, the satisfaction that is made for the injury which has been done. Shall we follow the common use of the word, and assume that in the relation between God and man God demands some satisfaction from man before he will forgive? that man has injured God and must make some expiation before he can be restored to divine favour? Shall we say that inas-



much as man sinned against the infinite God he has incurred an infinite debt; and therefore, being a bankrupt, must look to the Son of God to pay the debt for him and satisfy God?

“Let the water and the blood,  
From thy side a healing flood,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Save from wrath and make me pure.”

The references in the Epistles to atonements, substitutions, propitiations, sacrifices, satisfactions, seem to give Biblical warrant for this satisfaction theory. But right here is what we have already noted as the inevitable parting of the ways between traditional theological thinking and modern religious thought. As in St. Paul's time, so in ours, religious thought must accord with approved knowledge, and ancient Scriptures must be read by modern light. One of the fundamental axioms of modern New Testament study is the distinction between Jesus and his teaching and what the apostles and disciples thought about Jesus and his teaching; between the fact of the Christ and the various interpretations of the fact which are contained in Gospels and Epistles. Jesus lived, and taught, and died, and rose again; and other men remembered his sayings, wrote about his life, and put their interpretations on his death. Scholarship has succeeded, in some particulars at least, in distinguishing between what the Christ was and taught, and what

others have written about him. Now it is significant that, with but one exception, all the words in the New Testament which speak of sacrifice and atonement are found, not in the sayings of Jesus, not in the Synoptic Gospels, but in the Epistles. This would indicate that the disciples, in trying to understand their Lord, interpreted him by means of what they had known of religion as Jews or as heathen; that atoning sacrifices and propitiations were forms of thought taken over from Judaism or heathenism rather than from the teaching of Jesus. But even so, because of the individualism of the traditional thought the real meaning of those phrases in the Epistles has not been understood.

The social thought of to-day, taking its stand on the social teaching of both the Old and the New Testament, throws a flood of light on the subject of the atonement. It is significant that the writers of the New Testament in interpreting the death of Jesus went back to the Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah.<sup>1</sup> "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and with his stripes we are healed." Scholars are agreed to-day that those passages all refer to the nation, or to a remnant of the nation. By suffering in loyalty to its mission the remnant was to redeem the nation, the nation was to redeem the world. The whole meaning is social, and can only be understood from

<sup>1</sup> Chapters lii, 13-15, and liii.

the social point of view. When so understood they illuminate the atonement. Social also is the exception referred to above, the use of a sacrificial figure by Jesus himself in saying that he was "to give his life a ransom for many." This has been interpreted in the narrowest sacrificial sense, but the context ought to have shown that no such meaning is there.<sup>1</sup> Social thought to-day finds in the Lord's use of that metaphor simply an amplification of what he had just said, that he "came not to be served but to serve." To this he adds the word about ransom. Its meaning is evident; as a man might go to the enemy and ransom a captive, so he was to go in the service of men and of God to the point where his life was to be offered and taken. It meant no more than the laying down of life in the service of God and man. This was precisely what he did daily throughout his ministry, as well as on the day of his crucifixion.

The traditional thought about the atonement since the days of Anselm has been individualistic. It has had no regard to social relationships. The picture in the minds of all the great thinkers includes only the Cross of Calvary, the sinful individual, and his righteous God. Why was Christ crucified? they asked, and attempted to answer this great question in terms of God and the individual. The New Testament, on the contrary, al-

<sup>1</sup> See Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, Vol. II, p. 227 ff.

ways views man as a member of a family, a nation,<sup>1</sup> a church, or humanity. This is the view-point of the evangelist's comment on the counsel of Caia-phas, and of Jesus' prayer for his disciples.

From the social point of view the world is not yet redeemed; it is in process of being redeemed. Moral oneness with God, both of individuals and society, is the far-off divine event toward which the whole creation moves. Without moral oneness with God we must, as individuals, be without peace, and, as a society, be in wrong relations one to another. There is a redemptive process at work in history, and we are called to share what St. Paul called the travail pains of creation.<sup>2</sup> All the groaning and struggle in the social movement are parts of the redeeming process by which individuals are to become sons of God, and society is to become the Kingdom of God on earth.

Now Jesus set himself to establish on this earth the Kingdom of God, the ideal social order. "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth," was his prayer, springing out of his life-purpose. The Kingdom was the divine purpose for the world, and to accomplish this the Christ consecrated himself at the beginning of his ministry. It is significant that he went back to the suffering servant passages of Isaiah to explain his own relation to the King-

<sup>1</sup> *John* xi, 50-52; xvii, 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Romans* viii, 21, 22.

dom. It seems to be the tendency among New Testament scholars of the more radical type to hold that Jesus was an apocalypticist. Although their evidence is strong, we may believe that Jesus was rather on prophetic ground. The prophet, as distinct from the apocalypticist, was one who kept to the ground, who did for religion what Cicero said Socrates did for philosophy—made it “walk the earth.” Jesus, as our Revised Version attests, did not look for the end of the world, but for “the consummation of the age”;<sup>1</sup> his “world to come”<sup>2</sup> was not in heaven only; it was on the earth in its development according to the divine purpose. Jesus taught and lived and died for the sake of the Kingdom of God, a social at-one-ment with God. How was this at-one-ment wrought? By his words, his deeds, his life, and especially by his death on Calvary. That Jesus looked forward to his death as having in itself power is clear. “If I am lifted up,” said he, meaning, as the evangelist adds, his death on the Cross,<sup>3</sup> “I will draw all men unto myself.” A mother might say to her wayward boy, “You reject my words, my life does not influence you, but when I die you will know what I have failed to express.” Christ’s word means

<sup>1</sup> See the marginal readings of the Revised Version, as in *Matthew* xiii, 39, 40, 49, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Hebrews* ii, 5, literally translated in the marginal reading.

<sup>3</sup> *John* xii, 33.

this, and much more. It was the perfect expression of his love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." What Christ's words and deeds failed to do in his lifetime, his death succeeded in accomplishing. It brought home to the world the absolute devotion of Christ to the Kingdom of the Father. It has inspired other men to give their all for the Kingdom. It has expressed, as only a deed can express, the perfect moment in human life.

"One perfect moment in the life of love,  
One deed wherein the soul unselved gleams forth —  
These can outmatch all ill, all doubt, all fear,  
And through the encompassing burden of the world  
Burn swift the spirit's pathway to its God."

The Cross made clear the law of the life of Christ, namely, sacrifice for and perfect consecration to the divine purpose—"Lo I am come to do thy will, O God."<sup>1</sup> That law of Christ's life and death would, once made the law of every life, realise human brotherhood; would bring in the Kingdom of God. Vicarious atonement? How is society to become one with God except by a multitude of crosses, imitating that Cross, at least by willingness of all men to die that others might live.<sup>2</sup> From the social point of view vicarious atonement, as a continuous process, becomes a fundamental law of life.

<sup>1</sup> *Hebrews* x, 7, 9.

<sup>2</sup> See *Acts* xx, 24; xxi, 13; *Colossians* i, 24.



Only through the law of sacrificial service can society be brought into at-one-ment with God.

Jesus stands before the world like the Conqueror from Edom in the prophetic vision,<sup>1</sup> glorious in his apparel, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save. Tempted as we are, face to face with the world of desire and selfishness as we know it, he yet attained the majesty of a self-possessed manhood, the divine strength of a consecrated will. His seamless robe was typical of his character consistent throughout. In his presence we behold ourselves and know that we, like the prophet before Jehovah, are men of "unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." The Christ, speaking in righteousness, has had this effect on all consciences that thoughtfully behold his beauty and goodness. "Woe is me! for I am undone." From boyhood God was his Father, the supreme Reality, with whom he communed and grew into perfect oneness. But we:—in boyhood there are other realities, "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life," and in manhood there is the struggle between the angel and the beast. But Christ is also "mighty to save." He not only makes us hide our faces in humiliation; he touches our lips with a coal from off the altar. No man can look seriously on Christ, and be content in adding to the sin and evil of the world. He who

<sup>1</sup> *Isaiah* lxiii, 1.



laid down his life to save the world draws men by his very love of men to cease to do evil, to learn to do good. Accordingly, when Holiness asks, "Who will go for us?" we respond, "Here am I, send me." A man whose will is set toward righteousness is saved. Doing what he can to hasten the Kingdom, he is at peace, at one with the King.

When we go to Jesus himself and his teaching we find no suggestion of a natural chasm between God and man; Deity and humanity are not two alien natures, but one nature. All moral natures are essentially one in kind. Christ's prayer for men was, "That they may all be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." That oneness is a moral unity. The justice, mercy, kindness, pity, truth, which are in men are kin to the justice, mercy, kindness, pity, truth which are in God. In God is their source and perfection. In Christ there is moral oneness with the ethical purpose, the ideal, the will, the spiritual life of God. Man is God's offspring, "begotten, not made." "I and my Father are one," was true of Christ as "the firstborn of many brethren," and is, in possibility, as the goal of spiritual life, true also of his brethren.

What, then, shall we say the atonement is? It is the continuous process by which man is brought through the spirit of Christ Jesus into at-one-ment

with the Universal Father. Jesus never set himself to do a new and strange work which, once done, was done for all time. He set himself to do what he saw the Father doing continuously.<sup>1</sup> "As thou hast sent me into the world, so have I sent them into the world. . . . The glory which thou gavest me I have given them." Christ lifts up the men who are touched by him, reveals to them themselves, and inspires them with the vision of God abiding in them and working with them. When a man sees that, or is willing to trust Christ for it, setting his will to do God's will, he is at one with God, and relates himself to his fellows in a brotherly way.

Through the person of Christ, as through a window of transparent glass, we look into the mystery of the being of God, and see in the depths of the infinite Life the facts and processes by which the reconciliation of God with the world is revealed and maintained. "The ruling principle of Christ's life, in the imitation of which by each man for himself, and also for every other man, lies the soul's salvation, is there seen to be the ruling principle of God's life. Consequently, the punishment of sin becomes a remedial agency; the divine sympathy is assured to humanity in its suffering; and beneath all events and circumstances of life the divine will pursues its fatherly course of lifting men above

<sup>1</sup> *John* v, 17.

themselves, above the conviction of sin and guilt, into the spiritual and moral life of God.”<sup>1</sup>

What this modern age needs is a clearer insight that the Christian religion is not a series of abstract truths which have been revealed, to be accepted and applied to life, but that the Christian religion is simply life interpreted in terms of the consciousness of Christ, from the point of view of the Father. Here is our life, a marvelous complexity of transparencies and ever deepening mysteries, now filled with happiness, now surcharged with suffering. What does it all mean, how interpret it, how meet it with interest and courage? The final answer is that in this life, in its deeper recesses, we meet the divine Spirit, seeking to dwell at one with our spirits, and real life, the “life which is life indeed,”<sup>2</sup> the life eternal, consists in bringing our spirits into at-one-ment with the eternal Spirit. The process by which this at-one-ment is reached is the continuous atonement. In the consciousness of Jesus it was first experienced, and in his life it is made clear. In him, “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.”<sup>3</sup>

JOHN HOWARD MELISH.

<sup>1</sup> A. V. G. Allen, *Christian Institutions*, p. 372.

<sup>2</sup> 1 *Timothy* vi, 19.

<sup>3</sup> 2 *Corinthians* iii, 18.

XII  
SALVATION



## XII

### SALVATION

THE desire of salvation is the yearning of an unfulfilled life. An experience which awakens a consciousness of restriction awakens at the same time a consciousness of a life too large to be fulfilled under present conditions, and the urgency of this life toward fulfilment suggests the ideal of a larger, freer life, and awakens the desire for a fuller realisation.

The ideal of a fulfilled life may be very inadequate. It may be the ideal of a life free from physical suffering, or a life free from the fear of wrath and threatened punishment, or a life free from groveling desires and degrading influences and abounding in righteousness and peace and joy. The method by which this ideal may be realised may be variously conceived. Men have hoped that the ideal might be realised arbitrarily, and have trusted to magic, to propitiatory offerings, or to verbal confessions of faith. Slowly, however, men have come to realise that salvation is a deliverance wrought by a vital process, and is life coming to

fullest realisation by a gradual approach. Every transition from life restricted to life more abundant is a salvation, but thus far in human history by no one of these transitions has life been fulfilled. Each transcending of limitation brings a consciousness of still larger life, and each realisation starts a still nobler ideal.

As from the experiences of life and the teachings of history men have been taught to look for the end of salvation in a distant future, by a similar course of instruction they have been taught to look for the beginning of salvation in a distant past. Whereas religious teachers have been wont to ignore earlier transitions as unimportant, and find the beginning of salvation in a convulsive experience, they now bestow on those earlier transitions the more abundant honour as they find in them antecedent conditions of the great moral transformation on which they properly place the highest value. Every transition to fuller life is a salvation, and may become a condition of a greater salvation yet to be realised, and every effort to supply conditions favourable to such a transition is the effort of a saviour. The beginning of the process of salvation antedates the first conscious desire to be saved.

As a man begins to seek salvation the first need of which he is conscious is the need of *emancipation*. The primitive man seeks first of all emancipation from certain evils in his *physical* en-



vironment. He finds himself hampered, opposed, oppressed, a captive in a prison-house. His plans are thwarted, his pleasure is destroyed, he cannot do what he would. Earthquakes drive him in terror from his house, volcanic fires devastate his property, floods carry away his crops. Wild beasts stronger than himself are awaiting to tear him in pieces, and miasmatic vapours introduce into his system diseases which prostrate him in weakness, and rack him with pain. As civilisation advances and wisdom increases he becomes more and more free. But still there are many whose moral salvation awaits a deliverance from physical conditions which dwarf, impede or destroy the physical life, and thus render the man less responsive to the higher appeals of the spirit.

But even when the relations to the physical environment are more happy, there are evils in the *social* environment from which the man needs to be freed. In the earlier stages of civilisation men did not differ so much from wild beasts, and needed to be emancipated from the brutal hostility of fellow men. In the later stages there is less use of the club and the spear, but still the strong oppress the weak, the capitalist who owns the tools is apt to tyrannise over the labourer who has none, the politician practically neutralises the privilege of the franchise, the intolerant ecclesiastic pronounces anathemas on those who exercise their reason in

their search after truth. Society still includes those who are willing to debauch the innocent for pelf, the solicitations of the designing waylay and drag down those who are striving to rise, while aspirations after holiness, and impulses to generous service are chilled and benumbed in an atmosphere of self-seeking, where each seeks so exclusively his own things as sadly to neglect the things of others.

In order to the elimination of these evils there is need of social co-operation. But this social co-operation will be secured and become effective in proportion as the individuals composing society are emancipated from influences which work destructively in the personal life. It is in the personal life of the individual that the most decisive victories must be gained.

Here the man needs to be delivered from the *dominance of the animal nature*. Man is an animal, and animal passions and appetites, under present conditions, at least, are essential factors in his life. It is simply from their dominance that he is to be freed. Appetites are often imperious in their demands. Passions are apt to rise in wrath and like revolting Titans usurp the throne. If rebellion is to be crushed, or better, if it is to be prevented, if the storm once risen is to subside into a calm, there must be behind the command, "Peace, be still!" a power which appetites and passions have learned to obey.

Again, there must be deliverance from the *dominance of the senses*. The senses are indispensable aids, but they are far from being infallible witnesses. They tell us only how things appear, not what they are. They never look below the surface, their reports are superficial, and their testimony, except as corrected by the judgment, is fallacious, illusive, false. They tell us that the colour is in the rose rather than in the light. They tell us that the stars are twinkling brilliants on an arching dome, rather than whirling suns far out in cosmic space; and alas! they tell us that meat and drink are facts, but so far as they can discover, righteousness, mercy and truth are fictions. The senses speak up very loud in giving their testimony. But when in the witness-box they are subjected to cross examination, when their testimony is analysed and compared with that of other witnesses, it is discovered that they have but a superficial, vague and inadequate knowledge of the reality of which they profess to know so much. But the world of which the senses testify is not large enough for the life of which man is conscious. If he is to come to his own he must live in a world which has a longer radius than the tether of sense. In the sensible world he is like the prisoner who plods in his little circle around the post to which he is chained. Only as his expanding life snaps the tether of sense, and glimmers of light sifting through the clouds which

sense cannot penetrate lead him along a path which grows brighter and brighter, does he come out into that ampler and better world where he shall know the truth and the truth shall make him free.

While man in the conduct of his physical life needs to be freed from the dominance of the sensuous, and in the thinking of his mental life needs to be freed from the dominance of the sensible; in his moral life he needs to be emancipated from the *dominance of the purely individual*. Man, in order to be saved as man, must transcend the animal, must transcend the sensible, and if he is not to fall short of his full glory he must transcend the individual. Self must be asserted; self must be denied. Possibly this contradiction may seem less absolute, if we discriminate between the Ego and the Me. In the consciousness of the Ego the claims of the Me are presented, but in this same consciousness are presented the claims of the family, the clan, the nation, the kingdom of God. The Ego is the judge to pass on both sets of claims and do justice to both parties. The individual Me in presenting its claims, many of which are entirely legitimate, is clamorous, insistent, oftentimes despotic. But if the Me is allowed the place of autocratic domination, the judge capitulates to the plaintiff, injustice is done to other claimants, and the Ego which should be the minister of many becomes the bond-slave of one.

But emancipation is salvation only on its negative side. There must be a *process* of *self-expression* if life is to be fully realised, if the man is to be saved. The negro in his rags dancing with glee may be emancipated, but the man is not yet saved. The Israelite on the further side of the Red Sea, looking upon the Egyptians dead upon the seashore, may be emancipated from the bondage of Egypt, but the land of promise becomes a land of possession only as a more abundant life makes it a land of conquest. Salvation consists not in the removal of hindrances, but in the experience of abounding life. Life is the only absolute value. All other values are relative and must be read in terms of life. Hence only he who hath abounding life hath salvation.

But life is expressive. The ideal of life is not found in the oriental god who, free from suffering, free from worry, free from all thought and all emotion passes a quiescent existence on the lotus leaf, but rather in One of whom his supreme revealer, when answering those who thought his god was active in creation for six days, and then entered into rest, declared, "My Father worketh until now." It is not the monk in his cell, mortifying his members, crucifying his flesh, restricting his life in order to secure the salvation of his individual soul, who is saved. It is rather he who gives valiant exercise to his powers as he goes about doing good, who seeks to provide a better physical and

moral environment for others as well as for himself, who, upholding lofty ideals, seeks to free others as well as himself from the slavish pursuit of things which perish with the using, and also from the illusions of social conventions, the bondage of ecclesiastical tradition, the dominance of political autocracy, and the oppression of industrial tyranny; it is he who, realising how little he can effect by himself, unites with others in evolving a society which shall more boldly fling itself against entrenched iniquity, hurl itself with a mightier impact against organised opposition, and more effectively minister to the firmer establishment and the wider extension of a kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy. Life is conserved, life becomes abundant by the very process of living. He that saveth his life shall lose it, he that loseth his life in sane and loving ministry shall save it.

Man's needs in order that his salvation may be realised are great. What hope has he that the realisation may be effected? He finds himself in what often seems to him a maelstrom of forces far mightier than his own. What *ground of hope* has he that in this maelstrom he may find forces which will be friends rather than foes, benefactors rather than antagonists? Is there any way in which he may insure the co-operation of such forces toward the end which he desires?



The fact that amid the action, reaction and interaction of elemental forces the man finds himself alive affords ground of hope, and the more he seeks supply for his needs, the more evidence does he find in his environment of a *process of generous provision*. That environment does not need to be awakened into activity, or forced into co-operation. The seed does not start the sun into helpfulness, the sun quickens the seed. The infant is not obliged to prepare his own food, it is brought to him already prepared. Long before the individual offers a conscious prayer, he has been the beneficiary of manifold agencies, and the desire which tremblingly expresses itself in prayer is but a response to appeals which all day long are coming from powers waiting to be gracious. The babe at the instant of his birth gasps for air, and on the instant an abundant supply honours the draft. At every moment of the later life that same prayer is repeated, and at every moment there comes a supply in response. That same babe cries for food, and at his mother's breast he draws food which through manifold processes has been brought to a consistency best suited to his need. The mature man may be obliged to provide his food in the sweat of his face, but the energy which he expends is not comparable to the energy which in response to his appeal quickens the seed which he sows, and returns in harvest thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold. The man is needy, impuis-



sant, but mightier forces than his own have made generous provision, and it was in recognition of this generous provision that a lyric poet of long ago was inspired to sing, "Thou openest thy hand and suppliest the want of every living thing." Even in the physical universe the powers that be do not treat man in accordance with principles of pure justice and grant him only a strict equivalent for his efforts, but exercising a lavish bounty they make him a beneficiary of their grace.

But man is conscious of a life which is more than physical. He does not live by bread alone. And for these yearnings which bread does not satisfy there is provision in environment. Man yearns for companionship; he is born into a family, families unite in a community, and nations gradually prepare themselves for closer union in a "federation of the world." As life develops, there is a yearning for companionship of higher value, and though in a fit of despondency the individual may be tempted to sigh, "I only am left," as he lives the higher life he discovers that the spirit which has inspired him has inspired "seven thousand" others with similar faith and similar aspiration.

But while companionship is sought that the individual may be more abundantly ministered unto, there is also a yearning for those to whom one may minister. Man desires to love. Love is not his first impulse. The infant is intensely selfish. But

as life develops, the trammels in which the individual self would bind it are burst as life presses toward fuller realisation. The adolescent yearns for a larger world in which he may more fully express himself. The yearning for the other sex develops into love for children. Ideals elicit a hearty response. The youth is eager for reforms.

“When duty whispers low, Thou must,  
The youth replies, I can.”

The ardour of this altruism may not always burn at fervent heat, but the altruism of the adolescent burns more steadily in the heart of the parent and flames out more brightly still in the loyalty of patriotism and the devotion of religion.

For this profounder need of self-expression provision is made in social relations with others who appeal most persuasively to the loving heart. There is the mother with her self-sacrificing devotion; there is the wife whose devoted life and growing character are ever presenting a higher ideal; there is the father calling forth the worship of veneration; there is the worthy friend, the ideal hero, the inspired prophet; there is the Ideal Man, never yet transcended, in whom the noblest still may find a worthy object of a worshipful love. And if we look for a higher still — the great ultimate universal Other — we may, like the patriarch, gain glimpses of an elusive glory even if we may not see him face to

face. We look through nature up to nature's God, and we find evidences of wisdom, of power, and even of grace. We look through humanity up to humanity's God and we find evidence of sympathy and fellowship, and hints of generous purpose and self-sacrificing love. We look through Jesus up to Jesus' God, and gain glimpses of a Sovereign who calls forth the reverent homage of our worship, and a Father who satisfies the deepest yearnings of our hearts.

While man is weak and needs to be aided, he is also ignorant and needs to be taught, and to meet his need he discovers in his environment a *process of education*. Here again the initiative is taken in the environment. The mind lies inert until the stimulus comes from without. But stimuli come from every quarter. What the eye sees, what the ear hears, what the hand handles, challenges attention and piques curiosity. And as the mind awakened by these stimuli carefully follows the hints which nature gives, the man is gradually led on even into her penetralia, and there, as with implicit obedience to her suggestions he interrogates her in the form of experiment, offering his prayer for fuller knowledge of her methods, she graciously responds: "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom," which to the indifferent and disobedient are shown "only in parables."

As from the phenomena of the physical universe

one turns to the chapters of human history, and especially as he reads the record of human experience given in religious literature, he receives revelations of the higher values of spiritual life, and at the same time is inducted into a knowledge of the methods by which these higher values are conserved. Knowledge of the method is valuable, but even where there is little knowledge of the method the educative value of the ideal is invaluable, for when the mind accepts an ideal and concentrates attention upon it, by a law of his life the man is transformed into the image of that on which his mind is attent.

But because the mind finds great difficulty in concentrating its attention on any one simple object, ideals must constantly change. An unchanging ideal loses power, it has not sufficient dynamic to overcome the inertia of human nature. Ideals, therefore, either must be so complex as frequently to present different phases, or they must change like the dissolving views in a stereopticon exhibition. For this need there is an ample supply. Ideals are presented in a mother's ministry, in a father's guidance, in the loyalty of friends, in the devotion of heroes; in the toil, the struggle, the suffering of those who have purposely wrought for others; in the purity, the patience, the courage, the sympathy — the devoted life and the self-sacrificing death of the Galilean prophet. If the inspiration from one

is spent, the appeal of another may awaken a response; if the abstract ideal of a metaphysical Christ shall fail to inspire, we may turn to the concrete life of Jesus of Nazareth, and from that many-sided life will come appeals new every morning and fresh every evening.

It is through this process of education that man is led to modify views previously entertained of the powers with which he has to do. As nature reveals the regularity of her operation, and her willingness to give aid, he comes to repose in her unchanging fidelity a calmer trust, and after strenuous co-operation with her during the day, he lays himself down in peace and sleeps, believing she will make him to dwell in safety. As fountains of love are seen bubbling up and overflowing from human hearts, and especially from the heart of the unique Son of Man, he is led to believe there is a reservoir of love from which these fountains spring — that the universe in which he lives is charged with love. Instead of believing in a malignant power before which he exceedingly fears and quakes, he comes to believe in a pervasive presence before which terror is transmuted into humble adoration and the fear of wrath is lost in grateful response to a gracious love.

But the powers resident in the universe give man the strongest assurance that his salvation may be realised as they carry on a *process of invigoration*

or *vitalisation*. These powers are not quiescent, indifferent, absorbed in themselves; they are active, expressive, delighting in generous ministry. They are not only energetic, they are energising; they are not only vital, they are vitalising. As they are welcomed they impart their vitality to the entire nature. They stir the emotions, they stimulate the intellect, they give impulse to the will. But they do not equally vitalise every man. The extent of their activity is determined by the response of the man. The attitude and the effort of the man are essential factors in realising his salvation. Readiness to co-operate is discovered in the mighty forces by which the man is surrounded. What conditions must the man supply in order that the co-operation may be secured?

As we study the processes of life we discover that more is needed than a merely passive submission. In order to growth effort must be put forth in a *process of assimilation*. The oak is not in the acorn simply waiting to be unfolded. The chicken is not in the freshly laid egg, the mature man is not in the embryo. The oak, the chicken, the mature man does not yet exist, and never will exist until there have been unnumbered actions, reactions and interactions between the living organism and its environment, until energies which are operating in the universe are assimilated by a vital organism, and



intensify the energy of its own life. So it is with the holy man — the man who has come to his wholeness. He does not yet exist, and he will come to be only as, exercising faith in energies which appeal to his moral nature, he so responds to their appeal that his life is quickened and transformed by an energy generated through contact with transcendent vitality.

This process of assimilation is more than a process of agglomeration. It takes place only as the organism or the man reacts. The seed does not become a plant by simple accumulation. The body does not grow simply by the addition of clothing, the character is not developed simply by increase of the reputation — by the imputation of what does not really exist. No declaration that a man is righteous, no robe of righteousness even though woven in another's righteous life can make a man righteous. Nothing that is merely put on is actually wrought into the life, nothing imputed transforms the character. Only as the nature reacts on the action of other agents, only as there is a vital response to a vital appeal, only as life in contact with other energies energises more effectively does the life become more abundant or the character more noble.

Side by side with the process of assimilation must be carried on a *process of elimination*. Indeed assimilation and elimination seem to be com-



plementary agents in the same process. The food which nourishes the organism is not always presented by nature in unadulterated form. For such an organism as the human body it seems better that the food should not always be offered in quintessential form. That which nourishes and contributes to life must be assimilated, that which for the organism is simply waste must be eliminated, for if retained it will breed disease and hasten death. So truth, which nourishes the spiritual life, is not always presented in unadulterated form. We know but in part. We must prove all things, and the very test which brings the truth to light discovers the adulterant. This adulteration or dilution of truth has not been without value. It has served to present truth in a form more apprehensible by an undeveloped mind, and has given to it an appeal more persuasive to an imperfect character. But if after the adulterant has served its purpose it is still retained, it becomes a stupefying poison, preventing a clearer apprehension of truth — a breeder of disease rather than a minister of life.

Again, life does not construct once for all; it is constantly reconstructing. Scarcely has it built in good material before it casts it out to the waste heap to make way for a successor. Tissue which at one time is a condition of life is soon by the very process of living consumed and cast out. So in the moral life virtues which up to a certain point serve

to sustain and develop life later become vices if not transmuted into virtues of a higher order. Not only must the bad be eliminated for the sake of the good; often that which has been good must be eliminated for the sake of the better. The good habit in which energies making for good are organised and conserved becomes a bad habit when it resists or obstructs energies which are working for the better. The nature of man is not one of static being, but one of dynamic becoming. Much of the effort strenuously put forth for the conservation of that which has been good in the past is in danger of fighting against God, who, after he has garnered the vital energy which the good has contributed to the better, gathers up the lifeless remains from which the spirit has departed, and burns them as chaff in the fire.

But success in assimilation is conditioned on a *process* of *adjustment*. Life cannot be fulfilled, much less developed, arbitrarily. This is impressively taught as natural laws work out their sanction. It is taught also by the greatest of religious teachers, who, in response to the request of ambitious disciples, says, Such advancement as you request "is not mine to give." It cannot be secured through partiality or favouritism. It is determined by laws which I am not permitted to alter. "It shall be for those for whom it is prepared." If in obedience to the demands of vitalising energies a

proper adjustment is made to their method of operation, these energies will co-operate in evolving strength, beauty and joy as they work out more abundant life. But if through disobedience, or even through neglect, there is maladjustment, strength will be impaired, beauty will fade, and joy give place to disappointment if not to despair. The teaching of an unheeded nature but confirms the teaching which finds pathetic expression in the lament of a neglected God: "Oh that thou hadst hearkened unto my commandments; then had thy peace been as a river and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea!"

But a single act of adjustment is not sufficient if life is to be fulfilled. Environment is constantly changing, and life changes with every reaction on environment. Those who cease to readjust themselves are among those who draw back unto perdition. Those who, realising their ever-changing condition, constantly readjust themselves to fresh demands of vitalising energies are among those who press on to the salvation of the soul. It is from unwillingness to make readjustment that nations decay, and civilisations are buried beneath the sands, that religions become mummies wrapped in the cerements of tradition, churches die and leave behind them only the cenotaphs of deserted houses of worship, and enlisted soldiers in the kingdom of God leave their carcasses rotting in the wilderness,

because they are unwilling to make the heroic readjustment necessary to entrance into the promised land. The command coming to the Hebrew patriarch is the command coming repeatedly in every earnest life —“Get out.” Get out from present environment, get out from surroundings to which you have become comfortably adjusted, get out into a larger sphere of action, and adjust yourself anew to energies which work out a more abundant life.<sup>1</sup>

It is in this process of adjustment that man makes his most important contribution to his salvation. As he, exercising faith in the character of mighty vitalising energies, manifests his faith in obediently supplying the conditions on which, as he has learned, they are willing to co-operate, those energies which have already wrought in providing supply, and in giving instruction, will operate directly in the development of his more abundant life. He will be strengthened with might in the inner man, and will find himself living by the power of an endless life. As the ideals of a finished life, individual or social, rise before the mind, man deploras his weakness, but he gradually learns that mightier powers than his own are making for their realisation, and are ready so to energise his life as to make through him a fresh contribution to the end desired.

Hermann Lotze in his *Microcosmus* speaks of

<sup>1</sup> O. W. Holmes has exquisitely expressed this truth in a little poem, *The Chambered Nautilus*.

energy not simply as a quantum residing in one element or molecule ready to be transferred to another element or molecule, but rather as that which is generated when two or more elements or molecules come into certain relations with each other. In the physical world oxygen comes into intimate relation with carbon and there is generated an energy which we term heat. So in the moral world two personalities come into intimate relations and an energy is generated which we call love. Love is an energy generated by contact. A man hung up in empty space would not love. Love is generated by the coming together of parent and child, of friend and friend, of benefactor and beneficiary. Where the contact is only superficial but little energy may be generated. But when those who have hitherto been indifferent to each other, yes, even when those who have lived in conditions most diverse are brought by some critical human experience into an intimacy in which deep answereth to deep, energy is generated; the physical heart beats with a stronger throb, generous emotions are awakened, and the entire nature thrilling with an intenser energy expresses itself in words of sympathy and deeds of love.

But is not this capability of generating the energy of love due to a charging of human personalities by a previous contact with an ulterior reality? The religious teacher who by coming in contact with men

has developed the energy most effective in transforming human society teaches something like this. Jesus of Nazareth refers us for an explanation of his life to an ulterior reality, which he presents as ultimate. "I can of mine own self do nothing. The works that I do are not mine, the Father doeth the works." Thus he teaches that the energy manifested in his life is generated by reason of intimate union with a vital and vitalising reality. This vitalising reality, Jesus teaches, is eternal and will abide with men forever. In the Father of Jesus Christ there is abundant energy, but there is in him also the capability of generating energy by contact with every human personality which comes into intimate relation with him. This energy is generated by the co-operation of God and the individual, and bears in each case a character determined by the character of the individual as well as by the character of God. The individual therefore is not simply a passive medium for the transmission of divine energy; he may become an active factor in the generation of a fresh supply of energy for the enlargement of his own life, and for the betterment of society. An isolated individual who, responding to a high ideal, wishes to serve the law of God, may sigh in his isolation: "To will is present with me, but how to perform I know not." Later that same individual, instinct with an energy generated by contact with a vitalising spiritual reality, shouts in the



spirit of a conqueror, "I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me."

Salvation is the realisation of a more abundant life. The processes which effect this realisation are the processes of life. Where life begins salvation begins, for normal life becomes more abundant by the very process of living. Every transition from life restricted to life more abundant is a salvation. But the end is not yet. At every partial fulfilment in the individual or in society there arises a new ideal of life still unfulfilled. We have not yet attained, the prize is not yet won, there is an ideal yet to be realised. We must still be pressing on, and like the Christian apostle of the first century we of the twentieth century must still look to "the ages to come" in order to find in a perfected society the final revelation of "the manifold wisdom of God."

THOMAS D. ANDERSON.





XIII

THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF ETHICS  
AND RELIGION



### XIII

## THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF ETHICS AND RELIGION.

THERE are two strong influences affecting present-day answers to the question, What is the relation of ethics and religion? The first is the tendency toward specialisation. Ethical theorists with scientific training and predilections insist that the long-standing connection between ethics and religion should be severed, and each should be studied in isolation. The second influence, also in favour of sharp demarcation, comes largely from a certain type of idealistic philosophy generally known as absolutism. As a result of these tendencies, interest revives in a question upon which so much has been said, and on the whole so well said, that more would otherwise be indeed superfluous.

The scientist can make out a fairly strong case. He approaches the question as an observer who simply wants to know the facts as they are. Seeing that ethics and religion are distinct, he insists that in the interest of clearness they should be treated separately. In his estimation there is no better

way of putting an end to the interminable debates in ethics than by cutting loose from religious entanglements and applying directly the scientific method of observation, analysis and generalisation. He would even go so far as to employ for the explanation of ethical data the concepts that have proved effective in the study of external nature. Ethics is for him a science of conduct; it can be nothing more when viewed objectively. This objective point of view is maintained even in the study of the moral self, which then becomes a complex resultant of inheritance and environment. The task of the moral investigator is, therefore, to study in this objective way the relation of the self to the possible goods of life. From this point of view it is entirely conceivable that the study might be so thorough and exhaustive that theoretical ethics would fulfil the requirements of scientific completeness, and practical ethics or casuistry would cover with its code the entire field of conduct. This ideal may never be realised, but the same must be said of every other scientific ideal. The desirability of an ethics that in spirit and achievement shall be strictly a science of conduct is no more to be questioned than the desirability of a science of plant-life or of chemical activity.

Furthermore, argues this advocate, the scientific objectivity of ethics finds religion peculiarly disturbing. Religion is a matter of the feelings. It

involves conceptions that have their origin largely in emotional needs, and refer back mainly to the emotional life for their justification. In a strictly scientific view of the world these conceptions have no proper place. At most their bearing upon practical life is only indirect. Their non-scientific character is shown by their variety and instability. Each age and each type of religion has its own conception of the object of worship, the conditions of salvation and acceptable service. Any considerable advance of a people or of an individual in knowledge and practical wisdom brings about a change in religious beliefs. Generally these changes are so slow as to be for a time imperceptible; yet they are none the less real. Religious beliefs, then, are never finally trustworthy. As they inevitably reflect the temperamental limitations and imperfect insights of the believer, they can never be wholly free from the element of superstition. Such conceptions, therefore, may not without serious jeopardy be made the basis of ethical theory or practice.

This is in outline the argument from the point of view of science for the divorcement of ethics and religion.

Other reasons for the separation are put forward by the absolutists in philosophy. Among English-speaking peoples F. H. Bradley and A. E. Taylor are leaders of this school. They reach in their thinking a conception of the fundamental Reality,

their so-called "Absolute," which they are unable to use in their theory of morals. For them the Absolute is super-moral. He is the source—or rather is inclusive—of the wisdom and the folly, the truth and the error, the good and the evil of human experience. But in him all human experiences are transmuted, changed past recognition. The good is no longer good, nor the evil, evil. Truth is disguised error, and error is misplaced truth. According to Mr. Bradley<sup>1</sup> the Absolute is so little moral that he may appropriately be thought as originating error and "wild discord" in the world for his own amusement.

A worshipper of such an Absolute could get small comfort or encouragement from his religion, if he really hungered and thirsted after righteousness. As moral and also religious he would perforce live in two entirely distinct worlds, neither of which could affect the other, at least in a helpful way. Such a situation would be intolerable, if it were possible. The fundamental difficulty with Mr. Bradley's conception is evident. His logic has done away with all distinctions, whether intellectual or moral. Yet he contends that these distinctions do hold "in a sense" for his Absolute. Fortunately this Absolute is scarcely more than a bogey, an idol of the intellectual den. It is a *reductio ad absurdum* of a certain way of thinking about experience, and

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 194.



is so regarded by an increasing number of students.

Closely allied to this doctrine of a "mad Absolute," as Professor Schiller aptly terms it, is a philosophical optimism scarcely less objectionable, and equally opposed to any interdependence of ethics and religion. This type of optimism results from the doctrine that the Source of all things cannot be considered moral without implying that he has in him the contrast of good and evil, and, as the author of evil, does what he ought not to do. The good and the bad alike serve his purposes. From his point of view the world is absolutely good. He is super-moral. Worship of him can have no reference to moral conduct, since badness is for him as good as goodness.

This doctrine might just as well be called pessimism as optimism. So far as any human outlook is concerned, the distinction for the moral life is annulled. It takes the nerve out of moral striving. If what is evil for human beings is good for the infinite Power that rules and overrules, evidently the human personality does not count in the economy of the universe; man is an alien. Though by cunning manipulation he can extract temporary pleasures from the round of his existence, he may be sure that in the end the world will be too much for him. Loyalty is of no significance. Nothing is worth while. Thus life begins to take on the

darker hues, as the futility of effort after the ideal becomes manifest. Increase of knowledge only intensifies the moral gloom. This would seem to be the issue of a thoroughgoing optimism, which thus becomes indistinguishable from its opposite. And yet a belief in the moral indifference of the "universe" (the Source of all things considered as impersonal power) may in certain refined natures produce a feeling of moral exaltation and "divine" impartiality. Thus Mr. Bertrand Russell, who is an influential thinker among the so-called New Realists, and who sees better than many of his school the logical implications of Realism, repudiates theistic beliefs, denies that goodness has any more rights than evil in the universe, recognises no indications of a future life, and finds nothing in the world or above it to worship except an ideal of goodness which can nowhere be realised. His religion is worship of this ideal, impartial acquiescence in the evil as in the good, and indiscriminating love of all things. This attitude seems to contrast with optimism; yet the two views agree in giving us a world that is morally indifferent. Mr. Russell's courageous attempt to distil a morality and a religion from his negative faith does credit to his inner moral worth, and suggests the necessity of some sort of religion for every man; but it leaves one with the feeling that neither the moral nor the religious life has been justified. The depressing influence might be overcome if we were

allowed to look upon the present conditions as a transition to something better, and could hope that at a time however distant the good would triumph; but this is denied us. If, then, we are to have a morality, it must be in defiance of all the forces of the universe, a task that only a well-conditioned modern stoic might undertake. While in the interests of moral health we should want ethics separated from the influence of such conceptions and of any religious cult that might develop from them, this desideratum can hardly be used to prove that ethics should be separated from all religious beliefs.

The speculative argument loses its force with the overthrow of the speculation on which it is based. But is not the scientific argument decisive? Must we not concede that the two fields should be treated as quite distinct and without mutual dependence? The scientific argument is so far from being decisive that one may grant all its premises, and still hold that a complete separation of ethics and religion would be detrimental to both. Ethics as a science may complete its work of formulating a system of morals, and still want essential elements to become finally effective. The moral judgments and even the rules of conduct can find their justification and their full meaning only in life's ultimate ideals. These ideals are essentially religious.

This dependence of ethics upon religious conceptions may be considered from various points of view. To begin with, every thoughtful person feels the need of a comprehensive, unifying life-purpose. Without such a purpose life is scarcely yet moral; it is a chaos of fragments, a tangle of conflicting purposes. But a life-purpose must be worthy, else it will not bear the strain of the manifold and trying experiences that are the common lot. To be worthy, it must do justice to the deepest nature of the self, its capacities, environment and destiny. If a person ignore the essential spirituality of his nature, or fail to appreciate his more permanent relations to the world, or become indifferent to his ultimate destiny as made possible by him who is the Source of all values, then he will assuredly have a defective life-plan, and to that extent will fall short of what he might attain as a moral personality. Oftentimes we hear confessions of failure from those who, having realised their life-purpose, find that it does not satisfy. They are straitened and cramped because their life-purpose was not adequate. In the excitement of immediate success they did not stop to consider whether, after all, what they were striving to attain was really worth while. A person cannot understand himself nor appreciate the measure of his moral possibilities until he recognises in a thoroughgoing way his relation to the infinite

Source of his existence. With such recognition his life-plan will be profoundly religious. Its religious character will give him a new moral perspective and a new estimate of relative values throughout the entire range of human interests. His morals and his religion will be indissolubly united.

But it may be replied, Are one's duties different because they are looked upon as divine commands? Can ethics take account of such a distinctively religious point of view further than to recognise it as having a certain value for the worshipper? Does it not still remain true that the factors of a strictly moral situation lie within the limits of the self and its social environment? Where else are we to look for the solution of moral issues? The criticism seems to be valid so long as the only problem is the application of the established principles and rules of conduct to concrete cases; yet even then a vital factor, all-pervasive in its influence, is the conditioning ideal. Where is this ideal to be found? Surely not in society as it is, for it is freighted with all the imperfections of its members. There are indications that society is saved from continuous deterioration only by the comparatively small number of people who stand out against every form of moral laxity. One must then have recourse to society as it should be. Society should be all that it can be

in the light of the highest ideals of human life and destiny, ideals that constitute the very core of religious faith.

Again, view the situation from a slightly different angle. Man's moral environment is his entire experience-world considered as a source of values. He is encompassed by manifold goods, which seem to invite appropriation, and yet can only in part be his. As soon as he appropriates any particular good, he thereby forfeits certain others. Life is a choosing among incompatible goods. With the broadening of one's experience comes a change of relative values. Hence for every reflective person the question becomes increasingly important, What is the supreme good of life? What good within my reach is so great that it will serve as a standard and test of all other values, a good that I may give my life to seeking? Until some answer to this question is found, all other issues of the moral life must remain without final adjustment. But this paramount problem of the ethical life cannot be fruitfully considered apart from the question of man's dependence upon the Source of all being. Is this Source intelligent? Is he moral? Does he care what we do, or what finally becomes of us? Is he, as the Christian believes, making all things work together for a good in which we as his children may permanently share? Such questions beset the ethical inquirer as soon as he gets beyond the superficial



alities of his subject, and they do not become less insistent with the progress of ethics as a science. Now religion, while in no sense a system of morals or a source of new principles of conduct, does provide the answer to these questions, and thereby becomes profoundly significant for the moral life. It furnishes the one possible conception that completes a moral world-view, and thereby gives a new meaning to the whole realm of values. Subjectively considered, religion is an emotional experience resulting from a belief that among the possible values within reach of every man is one of absolute worth. Obtaining this, man has by implication all else up to the measure of his capacity to appropriate. This absolute good, according to religion, is the approbation of God, the infinitely Holy One who manifests to all men a Father's love and care. A vital element in this conception of the highest good is the belief in a future life wherein the moral self will continue to unfold and enjoy ever larger and richer experiences.

But what, one may ask again, has all this to do directly with ethics considered as a science of conduct? It may influence the believer in his personal choices, but how can it affect the principles of choice, the universally recognised moral judgments? How can it be admitted as a factor in ethical theory? The objection comes from the systematiser of ethical principles. But ethics has something more to do with ethical principles than to analyse and ar-



range them; it must interpret and legitimise. As the principles are the final norms of conduct and character, their full meaning and the ultimate source of their authority should be made plain. It is in trying to determine their significance and justification that the student must take account of prevailing religious ideals. This point may be illustrated by considering representative moral conceptions as formulated by ethical writers. The question, What constitutes moral good? is answered at the present time in at least three different ways. Some hold that moral good consists in pleasure, some that it is found in self-realisation, and some that its essence is social well-being.

There is apparently no vital connection between pleasure as the moral element in conduct and the ideals of religion. If religion affords any satisfaction, it may take its place among other goods to be scientifically evaluated. It will then be one of the specific kinds of pleasure. As is well known, John Stuart Mill, in trying to defend hedonism was compelled to acknowledge that pleasures differ not merely in intensity and duration but in worth. This is tantamount to a surrender of his position, for worth is an extra-hedonistic standard of value. As a matter of fact, the unsophisticated moral consciousness refuses to consider as moral any giving of one's self to pleasure without regard to the standard of worth. Pleasures in themselves, apart from

reference to the standard, are immediate gratifications of a kind essentially selfish. The moral heroism of self-sacrifice and self-denial for the good of others cannot be explained by calling it sympathy, which yields a sort of altruistic pleasure. But as soon as appeal is made to the extra-hedonistic standard, the questions relative to conditioning ideals come up, and they cannot be answered without reference to religion.

As regards self-realisation, one difficulty is to know what it means. It may be interpreted as meaning the realisation of all our capacities. But this would manifestly be an impossible ideal. Just as we must choose among external goods and forego some in favour of others, so we must be content with a development that is in a sense limited. The experiences of a voluptuary cannot be the experiences of a saint, nor can his development be the same. If interpreted as the realisation of what is deepest, best, most permanent in us, self-realisation must still vindicate itself as the supreme moral aim. Apparently it runs counter to such a well-recognised moral attitude as self-forgetful devotion to duty. One might plausibly argue that to think of self-realisation as our aim when we give ourselves to a great cause is a kind of moral treachery. It blights the beauty of loyalty and makes self-sacrifice a farce. And yet it seems evident that self-sacrifice for its own sake would be equally faulty. If self-realisa-

tion as the supreme moral aim defeats itself and results in unlovely character, it stands condemned; but self-abnegation for its own sake would, if it were possible — which is doubtful — result in self-stultification. It may be that the moral worth of self-realisation depends upon the conception of the self to be realised. Is it the self of passion, of greed for power, social prestige, æsthetic enjoyment, or is it the self that fully recognises its thoroughgoing dependence on the ultimate Being and appreciates its universal interests? Is it the cramped self of selfishness, or the self of universal good-will, with an element of infinity in its nature? If the latter, then the self must be forgotten in order to its own realisation.<sup>1</sup> It finds itself in uncalculating, unrequited service. Duty, loyalty, self-abnegation, service are the great words that mean self-realisation in the deeper sense. One may make such self-realisation the aim of life and attain the higher moral values. But this conception of the self involves the very religious ideals that we have been discussing; it draws its life from them.

Some ethical thinkers prefer to find the essentially moral quality of conduct not in self-realisation but in the realisation of social well-being. They thus emphasise the altruistic and social element. That this element needs continuous emphasis, no one who

<sup>1</sup> A truth constantly reiterated in the Gospels. See *John* xii, 25.

has thought much about the moral life will question. Sympathy and service enrich the nature of the individual as nothing else can, while at the same time they tend to conserve all that is most valuable in society. But may not this aim be properly considered a normal expression of true self-realisation? Social well-being would then be a supremely worthy aim as accomplishing better than any other the fundamental purpose of life. Considered as the immediate motive of conduct, social well-being seems the best that can be found. But, like self-realisation, it is closely bound up with ideals that are primarily religious. It will mean one thing to the individual without a religious belief, it will mean quite another to the believer. The man without a religious conception of life and destiny will not only cherish a lower ideal of the individual and of society, but will find it hard to justify loyalty even to such an ideal in times of stress. For him morality will show a strong tendency to degenerate into a form of worldly prudence, in which conduct will be determined by a selfish calculus of consequences. Though the restraints and constraints of society will still count as potent factors, they of themselves will not prevent the decline of moral quality in his scheme of life. "Eat, drink and be merry" would be the lower limit of such a tendency. In contrast with this, the religious conception of life exalts the individual to the estate of a child of God, capable

of endless development into the divine likeness; it makes society the training-school for individuals in their upward course, the "promise and potency" of the Kingdom of God. Such a view of life puts perennial vigour and vitality into morals, and gives new meaning and authority to the moral ideal of social well-being.

It must be already evident that the moral principles, such as the obligation to justice, benevolence, and veracity, are profoundly affected by religious ideals. For instance, it may seem just—as it seemed to Aristotle—to reduce aliens to a state of slavery, or to expose infants; it may seem benevolent overmuch—as it seemed to Herbert Spencer—to care for the hopelessly infirm and the feeble-minded; it may seem proper and moral—as it seems to many—to confine truth-telling to "best policy" limits; but for the developed religious consciousness the principles of justice, benevolence, and veracity are interpreted and applied in harmony with their exemplification in God's working, and with man's high calling in him. To be just, benevolent, veracious is to be well-pleasing to him with whom there is no variableness, and from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift. The man that holds this as a vital belief will place no limit to his moral obligations except his utmost ability to meet them. He will be just even to his own hurt, benevolent with an abounding zeal that

enhances the quality of his deeds of kindness, and veracious as one who looks beyond the present to eternal truth.

Certain thinkers take exception to this reasoning, especially with reference to the moral value of the belief in a future life. They count this belief as of indifferent value, if not actually pernicious. It seems to them to be merely a hope and solace to people who, for lack of ability or energy, have failed of the good things of this world. In recompense for the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune the believer is to have all that his heart may desire — for poverty, riches; for social neglect, the companionship of angels; for grinding toil, golden harps and palaces of ease. Belief in such an immortality cannot be justified on moral grounds, and certainly finds no support anywhere else. It is merely a caricature of the Christian doctrine. For the Christian the future life has only indirect reference to external rewards and punishments. It concerns rather the growth and enrichment of personality. It means the triumph of goodness, the fellowship of the pure and the noble, the co-working with the Father in realising his benevolent purposes. Such labours and such fellowship are their own reward. Belief in a future life of this sort must stimulate, as nothing else can, to high endeavour and uncompromising loyalty to moral principles.

We conclude, then, that religious ideals pro-



foundly influence conduct, and should be taken into account in a survey of the field of ethics. The ideals constituting the substance of the Christian faith indefinitely enhance the worth of personality, enlarge the scope and enrich the content of moral principles, and reinforce the binding authority of moral obligation. Without such distinctively religious ideals the morals of a people are certain to suffer. Europe during the eighteenth century is a striking illustration. When materialism had all but destroyed the vitality of religion, and thereby loosened the authority of the moral law, the people gave themselves over to reckless indulgence, and winked at evils that sap the life of society. In every age the appeal of sense, the fascination of power, wealth, and self-indulgence are so great that moral degeneracy follows quickly upon the loss of religious restraints. The most serious problems confronting American society at present are social and therefore moral; yet they can be solved only on the plane of those mighty incentives to high moral conduct which are furnished by religion. These problems will grow more insistent and portentous until the deepening religious life of the people finds expression in wholesome reforms.

But not all religious conceptions are morally valuable. Some are mere survivals. That religious conceptions should persist is to be expected in view



of the conservative tendencies inherent in all religions. As religion deals with some of the deepest interests of life, its doctrines become hallowed by endearing associations and memories, and its sacred books are looked upon as divine revelations possessing absolute authority. Hence in proportion as a religion satisfies the emotional needs of a people, its ideals and forms of expression become fixed. Yet no little friction arises as one or another tenet proves unacceptable to the more progressive. Conflicts that have been the scandal of the Church throughout its history have resulted from attempts to compel assent to creedal statements that enlightened moral sentiment repudiated. Whenever ecclesiastical morals have been the rule of conduct, people have placed a false valuation upon tradition and the *ipsissima verba* of the Scriptures. This has worked a subtle perversion of the moral sense. Pharisaism was the ancient type of this perversion, and other types are found in such morally indefensible doctrines as "probabilism" and "mental reservation." The tendency to substitute prayer for service, church-going and religious observances for honesty and fair dealing in business, is but another form of the moral obtuseness that may result from making an unmoralised religious belief authoritative for conduct.

The close alliance of religion with civil authority

has counted further for rigidity. In an established church orthodoxy is practically under state-control. Outgrown forms and beliefs are perpetuated because they have proved serviceable to the State. Religion becomes formal, a matter of subscription to a creed, and in consequence loses the freedom and spontaneity of the spirit. The fixation of form and belief through connection with the civil power has from earliest times been a serious menace to religion.

As religious beliefs modify moral theory and practice, so the moral life affects religious beliefs. When anything interferes with the free interchange of influence, both morals and religion suffer. But as between the two, religion is likely to suffer the more. Paradoxical as it may seem, religious ideals, though conditioning the moral life, are valueless even for religion until passed upon and approved by the moral consciousness. The moral test is supreme and final. Its authority is absolute throughout the whole realm of experience. As Kant showed, the practical reason is practical — that is, moral — only in so far as it is self-legislative. It cannot maintain its autonomy and submit to an external will, however exalted. Hence religious tenets, if extra-moral, may not become dominant in the ethical life without producing a legalism that corrupts morality at its source.

One of the interesting changes in the Orient to-day is the application of the moral test to such re-

ligions as Islam and Buddhism. By this test they are destined to stand or fall. Western civilisation, permeated and largely dominated by Christian ideals, is forcing the issue by enlightening the minds and quickening the consciences of Mohammedans and Buddhists themselves. To the Christian religion as well, the moral test is being applied with more and more insistence. Christianity is essentially an ethical religion, and encourages the most searching self-criticism. The task confronting the Christian Church is not so much to adjust its beliefs to the results of the natural sciences, as to complete the moralisation of its doctrines and practices in harmony with its own transcendently great ideals. This moralisation must keep pace with progressing insight. For example, if the Church still held the extreme Calvinistic doctrine of election, or magnified rites and ceremonies above social service, it would be unworthy of the moral leadership that is rightfully its own.

But is religion able to endure such a constant criticism and revision of its creeds? Are its ideals sufficiently comprehensive and elevated to provide for the moral needs of the distant future? If one could conceive of a higher moral ideal than the Christian conception of God and of man, then Christianity would in principle be already superseded. Critics are not wanting who argue that Christianity even now fails to satisfy the highest moral stand-

ards. But their criticisms can be shown to arise — as in the case of Nietzsche — from a perverted moral sense, or to hold only against some imperfect, though perhaps widely accepted, interpretation of the Christian ideal. It is the strength of Christianity that its capacity for growth in conformity with its basal conceptions is practically unlimited. Though many a belief for which men once were willing to die has fallen away, Christianity has not lost, but has rather gained in effectiveness. Its central doctrines have shone with greater lustre and purity, its appeal to the awakened conscience has become more convincing. The ultimate warrant for the belief that Christianity will continue to maintain its moral supremacy is the fact that it is a religion not of authority but of the spirit.

Inasmuch as the moral test is decisive for all human interests, beliefs that satisfy this test have strongest support. Thus the moral argument for the existence of God, for freedom, and for immortality is the most convincing that has been formulated; one may even doubt if there is any other. These three speculative ideas — God, Freedom, Immortality — in which philosophical thought and religious beliefs culminate, are beyond the reach of intellectual proof. They are the supreme value-judgments and are therefore to be accepted as true. For this is the logic of life. The human spirit with striking audacity declares existent what it needs to complete

or realise itself. Even the refined agnosticism of the schools is not sufficient to stay this act of self-assertion. In a morally healthy nature agnosticism is not apt to penetrate beyond the acknowledgment that the intellect is incompetent of itself to prove the existence of the supreme object of worship. But this only drives the individual to set up an ideal of goodness, and worship it as if it were somehow representative of the ultimately real. This act of asserting the validity of our highest ideals is essentially moral, because it is a choice in the field of values; it is also religious, because it expresses faith that the highest values are real and permanent. Morality and religion are thus seen to be inseparable. Neither comes to full fruition without the other. Morality is religion working out its ideals; religion is morality aglow with holy passion.

GEORGE A. WILSON.



XIV

THE ULTIMATE CONCORD





## XIV

### THE ULTIMATE CONCORD

#### I.

THESE essays have exhibited the transforming effect of the modern doctrine of evolution upon ancient religious thought. Creation, Incarnation, Revelation, Redemption, Judgment, Atonement, Salvation — terms traditionally denoting events, but now denoting continuous processes — have obtained a meaning as expanded as that which science has given to our idea of the antiquity of the earth. Both in the mechanism of Nature and in the history of man an immanent Divine energy is discovered in a steady advance through means to ends, while salient events successively mark from epoch to epoch the limits of old and the thresholds of new stadia of progress. These from first to last are the successive stages of the evolution of life from its foundation-building of the physical creation to its now growing superstructure of the spiritual.

Through ages of experience, of whose discoveries a sifted and systematised digest is given by the sciences, men have come to a revelation of the uni-

versal reign of divine law, continually working by reward and retribution to enforce an obedience which now, however imperfect, is more carefully given to its physical than to its moral precepts. Men are far more studious in making an ideal factory than an ideal home, and more thoughtful for the proper upkeep of machinery than for the life, limb, and welfare of its operatives. Much less doubt prevails of the evil effect of neglect in material interests than in spiritual. The very existence of a spiritual law equally imperative and effective with the physical is still foreign to the thought of multitudes in communities esteemed to be enlightened. That the order of nature in the world and in man reveals a divine Lawgiver, to whom self-assertive human wills are responsible, is denied even by some occupants of university chairs. Many, even of those who in creeds acknowledge him and in churches worship him, so set at naught his fundamental law of the good will, that the peace of European Christendom is still little better than an armed truce between nations ever preparing more and more formidable armaments to let loose upon one another through land and sea and sky, rather than submit their quarrels to bloodless arbitrament. What is extolled as peace is often merely the absence of violence and slaughter, but is none the less a theater of selfish strife between man and man, in which the weaker succumbs, and in the capitals of

civilisation a human wreckage exists almost within hearing of church anthems in deeper wretchedness than is found among savage tribes. Well did St. Paul speak of "the mystery of lawlessness."<sup>1</sup> This apparent reign of moral lawlessness, or sin,<sup>2</sup> under the universal reign of law, still provokes the ancient question, "How doth God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?"<sup>3</sup> together with the ancient answer of despair, "There is no God"; else such things could not be.

This perpetual contradiction of the sovereignty of God in a world of his own creation, the riddle of theology for thousands of years, has been variously accounted for. In the seventh century B. C., Zoroaster, the founder of Parseeism, explained it as resulting from strife between two gods, Ormuzd the good and Ahriman the evil, whom Ormuzd would finally overcome. In the third century A. D., Mani, father of the Manichean sect, which survived in the Church for nearly a thousand years, modified this by personifying light and darkness as antagonistic beings, divine and devilish, in age-long conflict, to be ended at last by the triumph of light in faithful souls, and a hell of endless darkness for all others. The Jewish doctrine of Satan, "the adversary" of God, whom the book of Job introduces as divinely licensed to torment the righteous in trial

<sup>1</sup> 2 *Thessalonians* ii, 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Psalms* lxxiii, 11.

<sup>2</sup> 1 *John* iii, 4. R. V.

of his faith, and whom the New Testament calls "the prince of this world," destined to eternal fire, has long served Christian theologians for answer to the ancient riddle. Thus monotheism is saved, at least in form. Satan and satanic works exist not in spite of but by permission of the Almighty One; but why by his permission is still the riddle; and it leaves the mystery no less dark than of old. Theologians warn away from it as among the secret things that belong to God the only wise. We must be content to believe that for sufficient but unknowable reasons he wills it so to be. This cuts the Gordian knot that demands untying. It is more satisfactory to the believer than to the inquirer, whom in many a case it leaves impaled on the horns of the old dilemma: Your God is either benevolent but not almighty, or almighty but not benevolent.

The strangest blunder of theology is its incautious admission of the untruth that God *permits* the moral lawlessness of sin. The latest of the great Christian confessions of faith states in more ample terms than any other what they all at least imply. Tracing the mystery to its beginning it thus states the common belief, still current:

"Our first parents being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.

"They being the root of all mankind, the guilt<sup>1</sup> of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation."

"*Credo quia impossibile!*" In creating man, God gave existence to a moral nature kindred with his own. Its essential constituent is freedom of choice in preference of right to wrong. To say that God permits the preference of wrong to right is saying that he *consents* to such abuse of his gift of freedom, either *against his will*, or, as a few extreme orthodoxists contend, actually *willing* it, in order to demonstrate his glory in controlling and overcoming it — statements that not only refute themselves, but are refuted by plain facts. Transgression of the physical and moral laws inlaid in the constitution of the world and of man is daily seen chastised, sooner or later, with unsparing retribution. Sin of every kind is constantly seen overtaken, speedily or slowly and finally, with avenging pains and overwhelming wreck. All along the highway of common life and of national history has time-long experience set up such danger-signs. Their warnings — "No trespassing here," "The way of transgressors is hard" — declare, as with the voice of thunder heard in the giv-

<sup>1</sup>"Guilt" here means, according to orthodox expositors, not actual guiltiness of that one original sin, but liability to the evil consequences entailed by it on mankind.—*The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1647, Chapter vi, Articles I and III.

ing of the law from flaming Sinai, the inflexible intolerance of God to sin, and his unremitting reaction against it.

## II.

It is not the existence of sin under a reign of law, nor even its worst enormities, but rather its extent and persistence throughout the world from immemorial time till now, that constitutes the problem of ethical monotheism, and raises question of the divine government of so disorderly a world. It is not sporadic crime promptly and justly punished, that makes men doubt whether their government is as good and strong as it should be. It is when crime is epidemic, criminals rampant, and justice seems to have lost her scales and sword, that the people lose their faith in courts and resort to lynching. The ancient cry of a faith sore perplexed by sin's inveterate and unceasing defiance of divine law is still wrung from loyal hearts: "How long, O LORD, how long?"

But neither the impatience of faith nor the pessimism and atheism which are prompted by the extent and persistence of the moral disorder of the world need wait for correction by any revelation other than that which has already been given. It is at hand in the great "Stone Book," in which science has recently deciphered, written as by the finger of God, the history and method of his work in the cre-



ation of the world and of man. This substitutes reality for the legend with which the Jewish answer to the great riddle squared. It supplies the knowledge adequate to a solution accordant with fact.

It is less than fifty years since Protestant theologians ceased to believe, in reliance on the first chapter of Genesis, that the world with all its living tribes was created by divine fiat B. C. 4004 "in the space of six days," man last of all in the latter half of the sixth day. That week has been lengthened by geology and zoology into æons of years in almost incomputable millions, in only the last hundred thousand or more of which the evolution of life advanced to the introduction of man. The earlier and much the larger part of that immense period was spent in the formation of the earth by the gradual agglomeration of small masses of planetary matter <sup>1</sup> into a globe, and by the slow dissipation of the tremendous heat produced both by the impacts of these masses and by the increasing compression of the globe, ever forcing to the surface melted rock. What a welter of world-stuff ever down crashing and up bursting! Yet this confusion was constructive, and as orderly in its way as is the dumping of loads of brick for builders at work. Still further, this chaos was ever overhung by more

<sup>1</sup> Minute specimens of these, some of them tons in weight, are the meteorites to be seen in museums of natural history.

chaos. All water now on the earth's surface or long since absorbed into its rocky crust enveloped that hot globe with a steaming cloud such as now surrounds the gigantic globe of Jupiter. For millions of years the intense cold of space, hundreds of degrees below zero, through which our planet travels, was condensing that cloud into floods plunging upon the hot crust only to shoot back again in bursts of steam, with incessant lightning blaze and crashing thunder. But how fruitlessly to all appearance, if viewed by one whose life-span is too short for more than a passing glimpse of an æonian process. A thousand centuries, and still the torrents plunge only to be driven back in steamy clouds. What gain, what end, what sign of intelligent control in such perpetual tumult and uproar? Seeing nothing but such a scene, how naturally might transient spectators in successive generations have asked, Can there be an almighty ruler of this mad riot and anarchy? — more reasonably, too, than they now ask, Is there a God, and does he permit sin to exist in its defiant rage?

But what was the Creator really doing throughout these immense cycles of physical disorder, during which the making of our world went on? So far from permitting tumultuous chaos, he was reducing it to harmonious cosmos. Those cloud-bursts descending only to re-ascend in steam-bursts were all the while carrying off into outer space the

excess of heat generated in the formation of the globe. Every one of them was contributing its infinitesimal quota of this cooling process, and effectively working towards the end of it in the preparation of a surface on which the waters could rest, and life begin to give birth to organic nature in plants and animals. Thus what a mortal spectator might have deemed purposeless confusion is now seen in its result to have been orderly and constructive work. At the heart of a seeming mystery of lawlessness is revealed the effective reign of law from first to last. From stage to stage of its process, as the story of Genesis relates, "God saw that it was good." The elements that seemed to be perpetually at war were really co-operating partners in making the globe habitable by fruitful life. And still they work together for good, while light and heat from the sun and moisture from the sea conspire to make earth the bountiful and populous abode of men. We now see, as God saw throughout the entire process of creating the world, that it all was good.

This retrospect helps toward insight into the real character of a similar storm-epoch in the making of man. "One God, one law;" and "man as yet is being made." Physically formed, spiritually undeveloped, his creation "in the image of God" is but slowly proceeding. Reasonably looking for

likeness in our Creator's ways, we shall see a close parallel between that physical disorder in the youth of the globe and the present moral disorder in the youth of man, which may be accepted as prophetic of likeness in their outcome. Is not our race in moral infancy still? Present-day morality was characterised by the late Professor Bowne as even "embryonic."<sup>1</sup> According to the late Professor Marsh, celebrated for his discoveries of the links in the pedigree of the horse, two million years passed during his evolution from a five-toed animal about as large as a fox. Longer time than hope has anticipated may not improbably pass before the spiritual evolution of man is complete.

While our globe was being so slowly formed into a habitable and fruitful world the Scripture teaching, "God is not a God of confusion but of peace," was seemingly contradicted for ages of ages by what looked like disorderly tumult and uproar of its elements. So the riot and rage of sin has long seemed equally incompatible with the Scripture teaching that "God is love." Behind both classes of phenomena we have to recognise one reality. In the spiritual creation it is what we have found it to be in the physical—the birth-labour<sup>2</sup> which is bringing forth a world that is to be.

Last and highest of animal creatures, man

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Ethics*, pp. 126-131. Harpers, New York.

<sup>2</sup> So St. Paul seems to have viewed it: *Romans* viii, 19, 22.

is endowed with a distinctly new quality of life, capacity for an indefinite development of mental and moral power — the spiritual faculty, whose sphere is in the realm of feeling, thought, and will. Call it spirit, or what we will, man is distinguished from all lower creatures by a unique kind of consciousness, an infant consciousness in most men still —

“An infant crying for the light” —

an ever-haunting thought of environment by a world of unseen life, and of kinship to super-human beings, with a mysterious feeling of responsibility to super-human powers. Coupled with this spiritual consciousness is one of alien kind, his “brute inheritance,” the selfish cravings and passions of his animal nature, St. Paul’s term for which is “the flesh”<sup>1</sup> — a term including psychical with physical traits. And these two, he adds, “are contrary the one to the other”; they pull in opposite directions. The flesh grows by grasping all it can get; the spirit grows by giving all it can bestow. High thinking demands plain living. Benevolence requires forbearing love even toward enemies. Devotion to truth and righteousness nails the flesh to many a cross. What conscience that owns subjection to the fundamental moral law of good will has not felt the conflict of these contrary impulses,

<sup>1</sup> *Galatians* v, 17, 19-21.

and smarted too, in defeat of the higher by the lower, of the angel by the brute? <sup>1</sup>

Yet why the conflict? The brute and the angel are each a creature of God, and, therefore each, when in proper place and use, as co-operant in the making of man, as fire and water were in the making of the world. A good servant but a bad master, proverbially true of fire, is equally true of our animal nature. So Browning said:

“Nor soul helps flesh more than flesh helps soul.”

The conflict comes when will or knowledge fails of the right place and use of each.

In giving him freedom of choice God constituted man his co-partner in the work of making man like to himself. God constantly spurs him to his share in that work by chastisement for every failure in it through ignorant or wilful misuse of his ennobling prerogative to choose between the impulse of the spirit and the impulse of the flesh. Not otherwise than through this co-partnership of God and man in the process of spiritual creation could it ever be accomplished. For in its beginning the flesh and the spirit are unequally yoked. The one is the full-grown descendant of an ancestry dating from the first birth of organic life on earth. The other is the germ of a posterity dating from the comparatively recent time when humanity budded

<sup>1</sup> *Romans vii, 22-24.*



from an animal stock. What other result from the juncture of powers apparently so unequal could have issued, except through re-enforcement by a potent ally, than ultimate extinction of the pigmy by the giant?

Here history records instead of that natural result a supernatural, signally evincing the partnership of God with man. The germ of spiritual man implanted in stiff and weedy animal clay has evidently been, as Jesus said to his chosen few, "clothed with power from on high" to overrule the imperious desires and passions of the flesh through the indwelling energy of a supernatural life. Centuries roll slowly by, and show a gradual paling of the sensual and brightening of the spiritual; the torch of truth and the touch of love are seen transforming sinners into saints, and tribes of cannibals into civilised Christian communities. More and more manifest is the subordination of the flesh to the spirit in the services of a world-embracing philanthropy obedient to the law of good will. However much of their conflict continues, its ancient mystery now gives place to that of its tendency and its issue thus far in such overbearing of the giant by the pigmy — a mystery only to those who fail to see at the heart of it the eternal Spirit and "the power of an indissoluble life."<sup>1</sup> What God *in* man and working with man has done is the

<sup>1</sup> *Hebrews* vii, 16, R. V. margin.



very opposite of what the ancient legend imagined that God apart from man had done in permitting the first man with his entire race to be ruined by a devil.

### III.

Lack of perspective is always illusory, and is fatal to any proper conception of the Creator's work. It has sadly distorted traditional views of it in the future as well as in the past. Its representation of all things as made in a week, and less than six thousand years ago, is equalled by a similar lack of vista in the prospect, representing "the end of all things" as nearing<sup>1</sup> within a time so short that only a miraculous theophany<sup>2</sup> is anticipated to put an end to the lawless sin that six thousand years of struggle have failed to end. In the perspective opened by modern knowledge these illusions, inherited from Hebrew legend and from Jewish apocalyptists, vanish. To the long vista of the past physical creation a vista of the spiritual creation now in progress corresponds, limited only by man's tenancy of the earth. That this is likely to continue for many millions of years is the concurrent judgment of the two sciences that are competent to form an intelligent forecast. Granting

<sup>1</sup> 1 *Peter* iv, 7.

<sup>2</sup> 2 *Thessalonians*, i, 6-10.

that the earth may continue habitable for but half the vast period estimated by the late Professor Shaler <sup>1</sup> of Harvard, the period of recorded history since its earliest fixed date <sup>2</sup> is but the eight-thousandth part of it — equivalent to not quite eleven seconds in a day of twenty-four hours. Yet in this small fraction of the time in which God has been making spiritual man what progress is apparent! The grosser forms of evil have been banned; brutality, slavery, tyranny, are shrivelling in judgment-fire; philanthropy has thriven, and religion grown more ethical; war lingers under protest, already shorn of ruthlessness; the rate of spiritual progress is accelerated with growing momentum. Benefactors multiply faster; legions of the good and wise increase apace. Yet man is still far from being made. Though the mountain tops are bathed in sunbeams, and twilight is brightening on the uplands, heavy mists still cling to the valleys and swamps, and brood over the modern "cities of the plain." What we see as yet is dawn, not day,<sup>3</sup> but the dawn of a long day. We may lift up our eyes to the hills and see that the night is going and the day is coming to fulfil the vision of ancient faith, that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of

<sup>1</sup> *The Earth and Man.*

<sup>2</sup> B. C. 4241 — Breasted's *History of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> See Tennyson, *The Dawn.*

the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.<sup>1</sup> 'As the landscape of a fair lake country tells the instructed eye of the vast glaciers that ploughed it into beauteous form, so will men in that day look back to the moral desolation on which it dawned, and think of us in this twentieth century as near contemporaries of those "prehistoric" cave-men who seem to us so immensely remote. A thousand winters more, and still another thousand may pass before dawn merges into day, and the making of man is finished in the complete subjection of flesh to spirit; but how momentary in comparison with those æonian hours of man's conscious unity with his Maker in spiritual control of himself, his world and the fulness thereof!

There is One Infinite Spirit, external to whom nothing is. This fundamental truth, revealed to reason and to faith in the discovery of his creative power at work throughout the course of time in the making of the world and man, gives pledge of the reduction of all temporary discord to ultimate and lasting concord. The ancient poet's dream<sup>2</sup> of a golden age of universal harmony was essentially veridical. The Hebrew prophet's vision,<sup>3</sup> picturing in hyperbolical imagery the subsidence of all warring and destructive powers into peaceful and co-

<sup>1</sup> *Habakkuk* ii, 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Isaiah* xi, 6-10.

<sup>2</sup> *Vergil*, *Eclogue* iv.

operant order, was no mirage, though forecasting a world unknowable in its remoteness and vastness. Because God is God, the moral disorder of untaught mind, undisciplined will, and unbridled passions must become as extinct in human society as the physical disorder of conflicting elements long since became in the habitable world. Nor can the evolutionary process of the Creator found working thus in our world be working otherwise in any other province of his empire. "One God, one law." Wherever in his universe chaos, physical or moral, may now exist, the elements and the organising power of a cosmos are in it there, constructively working toward its divine order. If sin disorders any other world than this, it can exist only as a transitional stage of God's process of spiritual creation. Everlasting sin, as the condition of damned spirits in an endless inferno, is as incredible as everlasting chaos in a fenced-off part of the physical universe.

This vision of the ultimate concord to be realised when man shall have been fully made in spiritual likeness to God is inseparable from thoughts of individual destiny. What of the innumerable generations that will have passed from the cradle to the grave while their Creator's work has been going on? What of the vaster multitudes to be born and die in the immeasurable time after its consummation?

Death cannot, of course, cease to make room on earth, then as now, for the successive generations.<sup>1</sup>

But have these later-born, who shall have attained, as St. Paul anticipated,<sup>2</sup> to full-grown spiritual development, "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," no life outlasting mortal breath? Those scientists who infer from the concurrent disappearance of mental and physical life that both end together, simply beg the point at issue. They fall into the fallacy, noted in Essay I, of inferring non-existence from non-appearance, precisely like the chemist who asserts that in causing life to appear in apparently non-living matter he has caused it to exist. In human experience the independence of the spiritual element of our nature is no less manifest than its dependence on the physical. Dependent on this as it must be for manifestation and efficiency in this physical world, it depends not on it for existence, either here or elsewhere. The burden of proof indisputably rests on him who denies this. The spiritual man needs not to prove that his prayerful communion with God and his joyous doing of the will of God will outlast his dying breath. Such activities bear witness in themselves to their indissoluble life. It is an axiom of science that physical motion goes on till arrested by a physical cause; it cannot be otherwise with spiritual movement; it must go on — manifest or not

<sup>1</sup> Essay V, p 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Ephesians* iv, 13.

manifest — if no cause of the same nature arrests it. Physical death is no such cause; it can arrest only the physical manifestation of a spiritual activity which continues. This is the true thought of immortality — not mere continuity of existence, but the conservation of active value in effectiveness. It is not, as a Platonising philosophy persuaded the traditional theology to teach, the indefeasible destiny of all souls. It is rather, as the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures plainly intimate,<sup>1</sup> the achievement of obedience to the moral laws of spiritual life.

In positing here a basic and incontrovertible principle of being we have reached the proper limit of the present theme, and the margin of the mortal world, where questions rise unanswerable by any who have not crossed the cloud-wrapt boundary to the realities beyond. Firm, nevertheless, is the foothold here given for assurance, despite the *ne plus ultra* cry of materialism, that spiritual realities exist beyond. The fundamental principle on which faith grounds its certainty of finding them there need not be supplemented here by other valid considerations, which could be adduced if required. The conservation of energy which science has found true in the physical world cannot be untrue in the spiritual.

<sup>1</sup> *Daniel* xii, 2, 3. For a critique on the O. T. references to future life see Cheyne's *Jewish Religious Life after the Exile*, p. 229 sqq. *Luke* xx, 35; *Romans* ii, 7; *Galatians* vi, 7, 8.



True as this must be for the generations in ages to come, when the process of spiritual creation shall have reached completion, can it be less true for the present, or for any stage, past or future, of that process while in progress? When Nero's sword fell upon the neck of Paul, the activity of a heroic doer of the will of God was cut off from the temporal world, but not from the eternal. True not for this world only is the saying, "God buries his workmen, but carries on his work." By Nero's crime this world lost a benefactor, but God did not lose his faithful servant. So surely as the doing of the will of God in the moral universe goes on unlosingly, its loyal doer goes on with his doing. "He that doeth the will of God continueth forever."<sup>1</sup> Whatever of spiritual value be developed here in the terms of active qualities eternal in their nature is not to perish but to persist in activity. Incompleteness can be no bar to the conservation and continuance of whatever of it exists. It must go on in active energy for future progress.

"Eternal process moving on,  
From state to state the spirit walks;  
And these are but the shattered stalks  
Or ruined chrysalis of one."<sup>1</sup>

To "believe in the reasonableness of God," as John Fiske said of belief in immortality, is to believe

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii, 17.

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, LXXXII.



in it as his conservation of all values resulting from his co-partnership with us in his work of making man in his spiritual image. God can be depended on for this, says the Hebrew psalmist: "Thou wilt not forsake the work of thine hands."<sup>1</sup> But where nothing of this is going on here, there can be nothing to carry forward to go on hereafter. Whether there is any of it in a given particular case may not be apparent to us. He will determine, whose will, so far as it is revealed in what history records of his Providential control of the world, is to let nothing perish that is of worth for man's ultimate concord with him.

JAMES MORRIS WHITON.

<sup>1</sup> *Psalm cxxxviii*, 8, Jewish version, 1903.















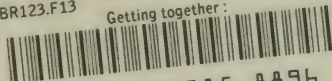


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